

S E R M O N S

ON THE

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| III. On Humility and Contrition. | XXIII. False Wisdom. |
| IV. Dependence upon God. | XXIV. Mutual Forgiveness. |
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BY THE REV. JOHN PENN, LL.B.

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 5—8 read *his death-struck eyes*.
 10—14 read a period after *believer*.
 14—20, read *place* for *places*.
 15—17, read a comma after *hemisphere*.
 22—12, read *so* for *to*.
 38—5, read *disciples* for *disciple*.
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 read *Suffolk*.

SERMON I.

I SAMUEL, CHAP. XV. PART OF VER. 22.

*"Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and
to hearken, than the Fat of Rams."*

IT is the misfortune of many in the Christian, as well as Jewish world, to pin their hopes of salvation upon the rituals of religion, without paying a proper attention to those heart-felt duties which alone can recommend us to God: A doctrine, I am sure, senseless in it's origin, impious in it's principle, and melancholy in it's effects. Intention is the ground of all moral imputation: It is through this medium that God in a peculiar manner, as the great searcher of hearts, views our "righteousness, judgment, equity, yea, every good path." Agreeably to this

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position,

position, our Saviour tells us, that " God is
 " a spirit, and they that worship him must
 " worship him in spirit and in truth." He
 is not a *Man*, bloated with pride, and lifted
 up by self-consequence, whom the flattery
 of the parasite, the cringing of the sycophant,
 or the lying smiles of court delusion,
 will tickle into good humour, when perhaps
 the heart, unveiled of it's specious mantle,
 shall betray nothing but the foul intent to de-
 ceive and destroy: No; he knows it's very
 secrets, it's inmost recesses, it's most retired
 workings; from whom the most deep-laid
 schemes of villainy are not hid; nor can escape
 with impunity; but who, notwithstanding,
 kindly stoops to improve it's feelings by his
 grace, and to render them more congenial to
 that purity which corporeal affections share
 not, but which the soul, the true, the only
 seat of religion, naturally imitates. All the
 attributes of the Deity, as the operations of
 the divine mind, must have for their ob-
 jects intellectual and spiritual qualities. God
 delights in nothing but what is in some degree
 similar to himself: And though he be in
 heaven, and we upon earth, yet we are con-
 stantly exhorted " to set our affections on
 " things

"things above, not on things on the earth." Gross earthly ideas ill suit the spirituality of him, who once appeared in human form, on purpose to encourage us to raise ourselves above the drossy corruption of a fallen nature; as well as to teach us, that though we cannot be exactly conformed to his image, yet we may be "transformed in the renewing of our minds." On account of the infirmities of our nature we cannot always stand upright, cannot always with boldness look up to the mercy-seat, but yet "in heart and mind we may ascend" to God, and offer up our sincere endeavours, our honest purposes, to effect what our finite, our depraved power, denies us.

To think or act upon other principles than these, is offering insults of the blackest dye to the Almighty: It is supposing that he will truckle to any terms we shall choose to offer him, merely to procure the good will of Man: It is supposing that God will dispense with his own laws, merely for the sake of us rebels, who wish not to observe them: It is supposing, in short, that God will deny his own nature, and though he abhors iniquity in us, and has decreed his

wrath and damnation against it ; yet, to indulge our obstinacy, will overlook our mis-carriages, and leave us to trample upon his authority as our law-giver, to slight his indulgence as our parent, and laugh at his power as our God. But can there be such senseless madmen as to suppose and act upon these absurdities? Can men be so much lost, even to common sense, as to set up such notions of duty against the positive precepts of Christianity? When Christ has redeemed us, given us a more perfect law than that of Moses, has clearly shewn us in what manner, and by what helps we may fulfil it ; nay, moreover sits at his Father's right hand, on purpose to help our infirmities, and to plead for us, how much must we be abandoned from gratitude, from love, from generosity of sentiment, from every idea that grounds the relative duties betwixt God and Man, the *Saviour* and the *saved*.

But waving these principles, which none but an heart studiously fortified against conviction can possibly entertain, let us advert to our interest only, though a sordid motive, and ask ourselves, "What shall we do in the end thereof?" When the hardened sinner has

has all his life played the hypocrite with man; when by a specious conformity to the externals of religion he has acquired the tinsel reputation of piety and goodness; when he has carried on the farce of dissimulation, and so inflicted a deep wound on real virtue; when this delusive scene begins to close with death-struck eyes; then to reflect that he possesses an heart that gives the lye to his pretensions, that he has nothing but the frontispiece of religion to present before his Judge, how must he fatally curse himself for being amused with the mere shadow, when less *real* pains might have procured the substance? How little comfort and support must he feel within himself, when he reflects that all his years, as many however as his genial hours inspired, have been spent in deceiving the world, in imposing upon himself, and (if he could) cheating his God? But that is impossible; the sun of righteousness now appears to chase away those mists which veiled the true knowledge of God from man, to lay open that breast which was only the sanctuary of duplicity, but to these, alas! he brings no balmy "healing in his wings:" None of that serenity, calmness, nay, even

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joy,

joy, that gives comfort to the good man, and bids him hail the happy hour when true wisdom shall be fully justified: No; none of this, only the most gloomy dread, and fiercest horror; the most violent distraction and agonizing despair; in short, a mind most truly represented by the "troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

It was the mistake of the Jews to build so much upon the ceremonial parts of their law, as to forget "righteousness, mercy, and truth:" These things our Saviour told them "they ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone." In the case before us, contrary to God's express command, Saul spared the best of the cattle, as he surmised, to "sacrifice to the Lord his God in Gilgal;" but forgot that implicit obedience which was due to the divine authority, and which in one single tittle can never be dispensed with. We are all of us, I fear, too apt to substitute our own humours, and our partial interpretations of the will of Heaven, in the room of those express positive precepts which Christianity enjoins us, and which will admit of no abatement. But our Christian obedience must proceed from a religious principle, and
whenever

whenever external and internal duties stand in competition with each other, we must ever remember that "to obey is better than sacrifice;" that though both are to be attended to in their proper times and seasons, yet the means must ever give place to that true end, which sincerity exhibits and hypocrisy affects. The fear of present pain, and the hope of present reward, are the principles which too commonly give birth to our actions: Those are the hinges upon which the exercise of perhaps our best virtues often turns. Our faith is not strong enough to view the riches of the Gospel through the medium of the promises; and therefore we annex temporary motives to the performance of those duties which receive their true reward only in the next world. But when we pray, fast, and give alms "only to be seen of men," what other reward can we expect, but such as men can bestow? "Verily I say unto you," says our Saviour, "they have their reward," that is, they now enjoy what they proposed to themselves, the empty and vain applause of talking mortals. Worldly prudence may, and does dictate these specious appearances; but religion, which is the offspring of the heart,

heart, wears no such meretricious complexion. If "any man love the world," make the world the first object, "the love of the Father is not in him:" This is their condemnation. But such hypocrites prove their own strongest opponents, because, by personating the features and form of religion, they implicitly acknowledge the excellence of the original pattern.

How current soever we may pass in the eyes of the ill-judging world, yet the base metal, with all the art of man, cannot a moment lie concealed from the knowledge of God. He looks more to the intention than to the act: His peculiar character it is to know the *hearts* of men: Every pulsation, every emotion, every infant-desire lie naked before him. There is not one single motive, however secret we may suppose it, that can escape the eye of his omniscience: The matter, form, and very essence of every deed, the thought, the word, are manifest in his sight: He ponders the springs of all our obedience, whether it originate from the pretended sufficiency of our blind reason, or from the faith of his revealed word. He can distinguish (it would be well if we could not!) between our *moral* and
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and *Christian* observances. Heathenism, in a Christian country and age, is not competent to salvation. Moral works are good evidences of Christian principles, and certainly entitle us to the character of good men, but they are not alone what God requires of us: He expects more; he expects that we should ground all our obedience upon a firm and stedfast sense of the necessity of the great atonement, as connected with the fall of man. We must believe then that Jesus Christ is the only sacrifice that God would, or, consistently with the sacredness of his justice, could accept for the sins of all mankind, for the offences of a whole race of wretched delinquents; that through his bloody pierced side only we have access to the Father; and that our prayers, praises, every religious act of the mind, mount up to Heaven upon the wings of his ascension. Until the attainer be reversed, we are incapable of any one good act that is valid in the court of Heaven: Our righteousnesses must be all filthy rags, till they be made pure by the immaculate blood of the Lamb.

These truths are so plainly pointed out, and so strongly urged in every page of the
New

New Testament, that it is grievous and astonishing that men can rest upon bare morality when our Saviour himself tells us, "without me ye can do nothing." Woe then to those Christian people, much greater woe to those "blind watchmen, those dumb dogs that cannot bark," whose tongues they will not suffer the spirit to loosen in order to speak the plain truths of the Gospel of Christ, who starve upon the jejune theory of ethical documents, but conceive no relish for those delicious gusts of true religion, with which Revelation so luxuriously feasts the mind of the true believer, To profess the faith, and not "earnestly contend for it;" to believe Christ crucified and not to preach it; is giving him a more vital wound than either the *Deist* or *Socinian*: It is implicitly acknowledging those tenets to be true, which we dare not, or think it not worth our while to combat and refute. We should "cry aloud and spare not;" with the sword of the spirit "divide asunder the joints and marrow" of infidelity; and ever impress upon the minds of our respective flocks this important position, that Christianity and morality, which God hath joined together, can never by any man, or set of men,
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be put asunder. May the great God then keep us all from falling, and present us blameless before the throne of his glory, with exceeding joy, only through the merits of Jesus Christ.

SERMON

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S E R M O N II.

ROMANS, CHAP. XII. VER. 12.

“ Rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer.”

RELIGION wears the worst aspect when it assumes the gloomy features of the sanctified Puritan: They mark so much dissatisfaction in the system, and so much distrust in Providence, that it may justly be questioned whether it be any religion at all. It wants only the sanguinary principles of Baal's priests, or the cruel, unnatural sacrifices at Moloch's altar, to render it the most disgusting, the most distorted thing in all the world. Good God! what hast thou done to us, that we should approach thee as a tyrant, or demean ourselves with the morose, comfortless sentiments of the most abject slaves? Surely we
must

must have forgotten the tender and important relation in which we stand to that amiable Being: We must have forgotten that we are his children by creation, by redemption, by adoption; that we are his peculiar care by regeneration, by sanctification; and that by his providence, "he feeds his flock like a shepherd, he gathers the lambs with his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young." These kind, these tender offices, serene the brow, diffuse a gladness through the heart that feels congenially with so much goodness, and so bring the comforter home to our breast. The best man has the most reason to be cheerful, and why? because he knows his resources: He knows that God made all his creatures to be happy, and has provided them with the means of being so; that depravity and wickedness first places us at a distance from him, and then tempt us to distrust him; and that if we seek him with all our heart, he will be found of us. Why then give entertainment to sorrow, when the balm is in our own hands? The sinner, 'tis true, must tremble, and, like our first parents immediately after their fall, hide himself from the presence of the

the Lord God ; but why hide himself ? only because his guilt appals him. It is that which strikes him deep to the heart, impresses a melancholy on his countenance, and, like a noxious vapour, at once extinguishes every ray, which hope, the genuine offspring of true religion, naturally kindles : The brightest comforts of a Christian become immediately obscured, and we are, as we justly may be, “ exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” Our Saviour felt this same compunction when he felt all the weight of our sins pressing down his human soul ; but this weight he nailed to the cross, and left there, that we might always look up to it with some hope and comfort. This is the only star in the hemisphere ; the star in the East, that can illumine the dark prisons in which our wretched souls are detained, by the bright radiance of the most benign love : It is the star of Bethlehem, that alone can conduct us, like the poor shepherds, unto himself, and inspire us likewise with those songs of rejoicing, which angels themselves continually chorus before his throne.

When we reflect upon the nature of God, as it is in itself ; when we ponder the various
acts

acts of the Lord towards us, as well as our forefathers ; when we advert to the manifest display of his wisdom and goodness, at all times and in all places ; and more especially when we call to mind the signal donation of his blessings to us in our respective situations ; how often we have been restored from sickness, lifted up from misfortunes, succoured in a wonderful manner by the most gracious but unexpected train of events, we may truly remark, that “ we know not what “ a day may bring forth.” The many instances of human wretchedness which daily occur, prove to the mere natural man arguments for despondency, and make him cry out, “ I will walk softly in the bitterness of “ my soul all the days of my life ;” but when we survey the reverse side of the picture, and witness to other many cases, wherein the most heart-felt sorrow has been turned into the sublimest joy, we must then conclude, that “ the race is not to the swift, nor the “ battle to the strong ;” but that God directs things in the best manner for us, that they “ that wait upon the Lord shall renew their “ strength ; they shall mount up with wings “ as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; “ and

“and they shall walk and not faint.” How ought we then to lift up our heads, when so much redemption has been purchased for us? How calmly and resignedly should we commit ourselves to him who judgeth righteously? And how in all distresses of every kind should we strive to copy, though in an imperfect manner, that great example of our Saviour, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.”

Now though we cannot equal that signal pattern of patience, yet we must invite the aids of reason and religion to enable us to imitate it. As “affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble come out of the ground,” but are directed by God, who may do what he pleases with the workmanship of his own hands, and, like a potter, may make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour, so our allotment here is no farther real matter of sorrow than as by our vices we may have contributed to the increase of it's evils. It behoves us then, and moreover “it makes for our peace,” often to reflect upon the attributes of God, that what his justice demands his power can inflict, that

what his goodness vouchsafes his wisdom can best bestow, but that his mercy tempers and harmonizes the whole. It is incumbent upon us to consider that though "heaviness may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning," that though the clouds of adversity may be suffered to impend over our careless heads, and so chill the warmth of giddy and impetuous pursuit, yet "the day of prosperity is set over against that of adversity," that man might have no reason to complain. We are further to recollect wherein we have most offended, what sins of ignorance, sins of infirmity, sins of presumption, and habitual sins we have committed, and then ask ourselves whether we have not deserved ten thousand times more than we have suffered, and thence be assured that it is through God's mercy alone that we are permitted even to live. "The ways of Providence are past finding out," and we know not to what gracious designs it's most intricate paths may lead us. We, poor short-sighted mortals, cannot, from some incidents of the drama, decide upon the event and issue of the great plot. We know not what is really good or bad for us, 'till "we behold his presence in
 "righteousness,"

"righteousness," till our souls, unburthened of this tabernacle, shall be enabled to recover their native vigour, and embrace at one view the whole complex of this chequered scene. This life, as a state of imperfection, cannot ensure any perfect happiness to us: For the general laws impressed upon a corrupt nature must so partake of that nature which they are designed for, as to admit of some abatement: Hence many bad qualities, and some present tolerances of them, must exist to embitter our peace; hence "it must needs be that offences come, even from the changes and chances of this mortal life."

The great Author of our religion, who, besides many other gracious purposes, came down on earth to teach us those lessons of duty which might at length exalt the Pilgrim here to the Saint hereafter, knows the miseries of our nature, and how incompetent we are by our natural strength to bear them, and therefore often stretches out his hand to catch us when stumbling in the way. It is the confidence of a good Christian, that if "in patience he possess his soul," not "an hair of his head shall perish." Upon this rock he builds all his hopes: The goods or

evils of *this* life he looks upon as obstructions in his road to a *better*: Under the pressure of the heaviest storms, his eye of faith steadfastly " beholds Jesus standing at the right " hand of God." As we are baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with, so we must expect to drink of the cup that he drank of: And though the measure and bitterness of the potion exceeded the common mixture of mortals, yet we must ever remember that both the vinegar and the gall were offered him on our account. " Consider " him then, that endured such contradictions " of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary " and faint in your minds." Leaning then on the bosom of that Saviour, " let us com- " mit ourselves to him in well-doing, pray- " ing always with all prayer and supplication " in the spirit, and watching thereunto with " all perseverance."

Added to all the arguments which reason can dictate or religion inspire, we must never forget to offer up our fervent petitions to God, and humbly implore an abatement, or removal of our misery: For " he will fulfil " the desire of them that fear him, also will " hear their cry and will help them." Who

so

so able to remove, as he who sends afflictions upon us? How wretchedly mistaken then are those sinners who fly to other expedients for succour and relief? As if those sins, that drew down God's judgments upon us, could be atoned for by the commission of others. It is no presumption to assert, that if a man sincerely and heartily addresses the fountain of mercy in the time of his distress, though he may not at once experience the good effects of his prayer, yet he will feel his soul supported by some hidden comforts from above, so as not "to be tempted above that he is able," and by receiving greater strength, will unbarb the rankling arrow. But the misfortune is, we are too apt to pray to God in our adversity, but totally to forget him in prosperity, as if it was not of as much consequence to be defended from dangers, as to be delivered from them. It is not every fit or start of devotion, upon a sick bed perhaps, that will effectually reach the ears of the Almighty; it is not every groaning and whining in distress that constitute the nature of prayer: The sinner may delude himself by leaning on this bruised reed, but let him recollect that this cry is uttered only with a

view of serving himself, instead of serving God. No; "We must continue instant in prayer," with an uniform tenour of soul embrace every opportunity of acknowledging the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, not only on Sunday, but every day, every morning and evening in private, "in season, out of season." He very often, no doubt, denies our requests, because seeing the depravity and selfishness of our hearts, he knows that "like a dog, we should return to our vomit again," and to render our "last state worse than the first." While the rod of affliction lies heavy upon us we are led to reflect, and God foresees that probably by continuing the cause, he may secure the effect of the reformation; by habituating our souls to the posture and sentiments of a religious sorrow we may at length naturalize them, and make them our own. I cannot but remark, that of the many who desire the prayers of the congregation, so few are found who return thanks upon their recovery: An evident proof that their religion is hypocritical, not issuing from the heart, only selfish, and calculated to serve a present by-turn. God knows how unthankful we should prove, and therefore rejects some of our petitions;

petitions; he spares our lives in hopes of amendment, but dares not trust us with other blessings. Prayer and thanksgiving must be the joint sinews of each other, well-knit together; and if our heart be right with God, we shall always be as sensible of the removal as of the smart of the punishment. May we all revolve these few documents in our minds, and the Lord grant us a right understanding in all things.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

PSALM CVII. VER. 43.

*“Whoso is wise will ponder these things: And
 “they shall understand the loving kindness of
 “the Lord.”*

WHOSO is wise! a pretty compliment to pay the present affected race of mortals. Do not all possess wisdom, or do not all pretend to it? The whole world are wise in their own conceit: Every fool thinks himself such. Imagination blows up the coals of vanity, by a singularity of presumption their insignificancy passes into something, and at last they confidently set themselves up as shining lights, though never seen but by themselves: Each man mounts his hobby-horse, and with the bridle of arrogance, by the dim light of
 ignorance

ignorance takes each his road, and rides post to the Devil. Wisdom then is courted by every body, and known only to a very few. The false species of it appears in a coat of many colours, which is covered by so many patches and scraps that it is scarce discernible from the garb of real folly. Whoso is wise, says the Psalmist: Had he lived in these times, every one would have been forward to have slapped his face, and called him a rude, unpolite, unfashionable, vulgar fellow: The degenerate throng would have crowded upon the truth, and have voted the doubt out of the letter of Scripture.

Look around then and see whether any really are wise; if your search prove fruitless, I will take you by the hand and tell you. The courtier thinks himself wise in impeaching the good, in flattering the bad, in wriggling himself into blind favour, in getting a place where there is no trouble, or a pension, as a reward for that which he has never done. The citizen, the big-bellied citizen, gorged with turtle and venison, thinks himself wise in being the mouth-piece of a coffee-house company, in calculating the price of stocks, in wasting gay-spent festive nights, in rioting
in

in luxury, and by the found of the trumpet feeding the poor. The gamester places his wisdom in the delusive cast of dice, in larding them handsomely with oaths, in ruining families, and at last hanging himself. The fribble thinks himself wise in turning himself into an ape, in being a disgrace to human reason, in laughing at the awkwardness of others, and seeing his own dear image smiling upon itself in the glass. The purse-proud peasant, sprung from the dunghill of obscurity, just started up as out of an egg-shell, thinks himself wise in bullying the privileges of others, in levelling all his superiors, and in short, hugely spreading himself to hide the dung from whence he sprung; but nature basely peeps through this front-work of impudence, shews us the deformity of the creature, and tells us that his self-importance is only the disease of a weak brain.

Such is the picture of the age, and yet these are the wise of the world; the wise of this but not of the next. This world affords specimens of bastard-wisdom only, such as cannot recommend itself even to good men, much less to God: But the things which the Psalmist advises to ponder are the acts of
 God's

God's power and goodness shewn both in our preservation and redemption. 'Tis not the great, the important, the careless, the busy, the luxurious, the wanton, and the admirers of themselves that he addresses; it is the Christian only that can truly think of these, or that can truly taste and feel the loving kindness of the Lord: Put not on therefore the exterior trappings of wisdom, but learn to be wise unto salvation. The time will come when every finesse must be unveiled, every piece of flattery detected, all blustering appear as froth, and every silly pretension fly off at the face of the real and naked truth. Though power now sways the docile aping populace, yet that power shall then dwindle into a nothingness, and be swallowed up by the smallest ray of omnipotent greatness. Though riches now can purchase a lucrative place or a post of honour, yet then the rich, too many of them I fear, will reap few advantages, will be excluded with disgrace, nor thought worthy even the lowest room: To secure an interest in the court of Heaven, on the grand election of righteous souls, is the highest wisdom and the truest policy. The short-sighted schemes of this world must fall down before infinite wisdom, and the projectors stand appalled, astonished,

astonished, abashed at their insignificant pretensions. Then their thoughts, which have hitherto been employed in secular concerns and pleasures, will find themselves lost in their visionary projects, and see nothing to ponder but ruin and inevitable destruction; a sore rankling canker-worm to the soul, ever corroding but never devouring; misery begetting itself more horrid, and punishment by time growing more intolerable to itself.

Would we wish then to avoid this woeful, this deprecable fate? Read the Scriptures; more especially the last revelation of God's will; attend maturely to their Christian precepts, rivet them closely to your hearts, bind them about your necks, fasten to the frontlets of your head, that even your countenance may speak religion. Let not popular opinion court and flatter your attention; let not custom, that bane of all virtue, sweep you down its malignant torrent, and drown you in the vast abyss. The world will speak different accents from these: The falsely-wise will argue with you upon your necessities, will appeal to a principle too much attended to, called *Avarice*, and by subtlety draw you into a confession of their baneful doctrine:

They

They will tell you that man came into the world with innumerable wants, that most things were created to supply those wants, that the knaveries of mankind in general require Argus's eyes to guard against them, that you must either chime in with the world or starve: This specious, this sophisticated reasoning, alarms the sensibility. Nay, they go farther, and tell you that religion, which is God's work, cannot be performed till the moment he pleases, therefore it is in vain to endeavour, and that at the appointed time, in your old age perhaps, you will receive a call: Though they believe not these things themselves, yet they now serve their purpose, they serve to reconcile in some degree the men to themselves, and therefore are suffered to wear a feasible appearance, though absolutely false.

In steps an objector, and says, hark you, my foolish friend, did you ever read this? "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord; and this night thy soul shall be required of thee:" Compare these two texts together, and the foregoing reasoning falls to the ground: This advocate then, like other fools, lays hold of the slender twig of despair,
and

and so sinks into everlasting ruin. How weak and defenceless are all arguments in favour either of infidelity or vice? Like cobwebs, a single blast of religion destroys their texture and delivers the infatuated captive. You therefore, who have hitherto been snared by the charms, the delusive charms of worldly motives, once look around you with a serious eye, and see what in this life can in the least avail you in a dying hour, see what of all your darling concerns you can then turn to a future advantage, and reflect what portion, what little small part of your time has been happily employed in the service of God and goodness. This is now the test, this the grand rub that galls the conscience to reflect, that we have been falsely wise in points that then cannot benefit us, and foolish in those matters which then should prove our only comfort and most solid satisfaction. Rouse therefore out of the lethargy of sin, turn a deaf ear to the delusive whispers of Satan, shake off those hellish chains that captivate your souls and bind you in darkness.

But it may be enquired how we are to know that we are at any time deluded? I will tell you socratically, by asking a few questions.

questions. Do we understand the loving-kindness of the Lord? Do we delight in his services? Do we rejoice in his holy word? Do the examples produced in Scripture excite in our minds rapturous emotions? When we hear the promises of the Gospel, does our heart leap within us; or it's threats decreed, does it grow languid with fear? Do we hear the word explained with an earnest desire of information? When we go to church, is it from a sense of our duty or from the force of custom? Do we attend in God's house with ardent and flaming affections or with indifference and reluctance? Let us lay these questions home to our breast, and if our conscience to each of these give a smiling and joyous answer, then have we confidence towards God. For in vain are all forms attended to, unless the heart suck up the very quintessence of pure religion, and feeds on the heavenly banquet of the Gospel. It is the soul only, that can feel and taste and enjoy, that can pant after and relish the true heavenly pleasure: The body is nothing, though we bestow so much care and solicitude about it; that is only the seat of diseases and the rotten part of the constitution; but the
 soul,

soul, whose sensibility is a part of God himself, must return to the same God to be examined as to it's losses and defects. Let not then the pleasures, the profits, the honours of this transient world, engross your attention to the neglect of substantial and everlasting joys. Let not the spurious charms of human vanity intoxicate your brain, and leave you without a single spark of eye-sight or reason. Every thing on this side of the Sun must fail our warmest hopes, and elude our most earnest expectations: An extravagant folly then to trust in them, or to build the smallest hope upon such an unsolid basis! When we have arrived to the very pinnacle of our confidence, yet still we must descend, lower perhaps than we were before. Raise ourselves on the highest Babel that our folly can invent, and presumption execute, still we must fall infinitely short of Heaven: That cannot be touched by a sensual finger, or will ever one single ray of heavenly light conduct us, thus corrupted, in our way to it. That is only to be found by devout and fervent prayer, springing from faith, and working by love. Pray therefore from your very hearts, believe firmly from your very souls,

and let the purling streams of general benevolence swell into oceans of kindness, and make you in others happy. Here only can we approximate to God, when we assimilate to that divine philanthropy which caused the Son to quit the bosom of the Father, which moved him whilst on earth "to preach
 "good tidings unto the meek, to bind up
 "the broken-hearted, to comfort all that
 "mourn, to give unto them beauty for
 "ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the
 "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and having fulfilled the time of his prophetic office, he stooped to the indignity of nailing our sins to the Cross, and triumphing over them in it. "The wisdom of
 "this world" then, which so shamefully betrayed itself in the conduct of the Jews, and which so evidently distinguishes the men of this generation, will ever appear, and prove
 "foolishness with God," The wisdom which is "from above," and which the Spirit of God, in opposition to the Prince of Darkness, inculcates to our minds, "is first pure, then
 "peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated,
 "full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality

“tiality and without hypoerify. If any
 “lack this wisdom, let him ask of God that
 “giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth
 “not, and it shall be given him.”

...and without property. If any
...in his life of God that
...to all men liberty, and
...not, and shall be given him.

DEERHART

S E R M O N IV.

COLOSSIANS, CHAP. III. PART OF VER. 13.

"Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

LET any person, who pretends to call himself a Christian, sit down and seriously reflect how exceedingly abundant the love of Christ has been towards us, how grievous our offences have been, and daily are, and yet with what freedom he pardons, he must certainly be at a loss to express his wonder, and must blush at the notorioufness of the present ingratitude. Look around the world, and only pay a small attention to the prevailing principles of it, and we shall wonder how people can be so lost to all sense of shame, and every spark of gratitude. Let a stranger, an Heathen, who never heard more of the name of Christ than that there

was such a person, let him be acquainted that we are called followers of that Christ, and let him moreover be then informed from the Scriptures, of his doctrines and example, so far from being his disciple, he will either conclude us to be deserters and apostates, or else infer that Christianity is all a bugbear and piece of invention: Such is the conclusion that would be the natural result from a view of such glaring contradictions as the *Saviour* and the *saved*.

Only consider with me one moment, what it is to be saved: It is not to be rescued from bodily danger; though that is an instance of Providence highly to be praised: It is not to be saved from breaking, when our worldly affairs are in a tottering state; though we should hug ourselves under a sense of that unexpected happiness: It is not to be saved from a conflicting sickness; though that is a wonderful blessing, health being that without which every thing is nothing: It is not to make a good bargain; though that is called a very good thing: It is not to possess immense sums of money; though no one, or very few, would hesitate to value such a good fortune: It is not to enjoy every thing in
this

this life which the human heart can possibly pant after ; though in the possession of the dear idol we should feel a wonderful transport : It is more than all this. When these bodies of ours are laid low in the senseless grave, and mouldered into their kindred dust ; when our riches, which now so much engross our attention, shall be mixed with the elements, or left to the profuse consumption of prodigal heirs ; when sickness can no more invade our dwellings, and the soul, loosed from the body, can no longer groan with sympathetic anguish ; when the dearest objects of our bliss cease to charm our warmest desires, and every past pleasure appears only a minute's dream ; when all possibility of enjoyment here is totally removed, and in the eye of the worldly-minded man we are gone to leave all joy behind us ; it is then to be more extatically happy than ever we were before. Though we sat on the Throne of Majesty, and ruled kingdoms with a nod ; though in our life-time we mixed with the splendour of courts, and called pomp our brother, and pleasure our sister ; though we had rioted in the very circle of gaiety, and every infant-wish met with the amplest correspondent

respondent gratification; and though every scheme we could propose was crowned with the largest success; yet all these things, which men are too apt to reckon the ultimate of happiness, fall infinitely short of salvation. To be saved is "to behold God's presence in righteousness," to satisfy the anxious longings of the soul with the fullest measure of congenial delight; to be possessed, in short, of every real pleasure. Most of the things we enjoy in this life are adulterated by dissatisfaction, discontent, remorse, horror, or some gloomy, gnawing passion; but the felicity of Heaven knows no fallacy, no alloy, but even imagination itself, that now so delusively paints the finest scenes, shall then be swallowed up in fruition: But, expressive silence, muse it's glory!

Did mankind more frequently peruse the Scriptures, and thence learn the threats that are denounced against impenitent sinners, and the glorious privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah, we should not find so many that thought erroneously, or never thought at all. These things are constantly inculcated, and by the Ministers of the Gospel urged upon their attention; but either they will not hear
or

or not regard; and until inclination fall in with their duty, we may as well attempt to shew a blind man a delightful prospect, or serenade a deaf one with a melodious concert: Talk to them upon their business, and they will readily listen with greedy attention; point out in what manner they may improve their fortunes, we then pin them down and fix their lucrative minds; relate to them the news of some great advantage, and depend upon it we shall be most welcomely received; but only once touch on the subject of the soul, expatiate on the happiness of the Gospel dispensation, and how much misery we have escaped by performing the conditions; tell them how much more noble and generous it is to forgive than to avenge an injury, and how much more easily we conquer an enemy by doing him an early, unexpected kindness; they will either politely sit with a stupid indifference, or openly condemn us as spiritless, pusillanimous wretches, deserving the most disgraceful castigation.

But is there a more glaring breach of Christian duty than in supporting animosities and discord amongst each other? Christ is all along through the whole Gospel propounded

pounded as an example of love ; we are exhorted in almost every page to love one another ; we have our Saviour's tenderness to us as a model of ours to our brethren ; we want no motive to the practice, if we only reflect how heinous our sins are towards God, such as our offences against our brethren can never be, yet they are forgiven, if we only choose to fulfill the condition of forgiving others. If we wish to approve ourselves to God, we must put on " bowels of mercies," not one single act, and think that sufficient ; but mercies, a continued succession of humane acts and merciful deeds : This we must do in imitation of God. For though we daily rebel against his great goodness, and oftener deserve the severest strokes of his justice, yet he causes " his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust ;" does not withdraw his blessings on account of our miscarriages, but still " dealeth out his bread to the hungry," and " satisfieth the empty soul with goodness : " For this reason we should always be kind and tender to the poor ; and as the winter season is commonly very piercing, and with cold winds nips the poverty-

verty-struck flesh of our fellow-creatures, we should contribute to cover their nakedness with a garment. As provisions of all kinds, on account of our national burden, must be expensive, and therefore make large drafts on the scanty weekly wages of the poor labouring man; and as few enjoy the blessing of a morsel of meat, and some not even a sufficiency of bread, when we are in plenty we should think of want, and relieve it's necessities by the crumbs that would otherwise fall from our well-furnished tables: We should not accustom ourselves to accost them with an haughty severity, but with the cheerful countenance of tenderness smile upon them, and with the widow's mite solace the dismal face of sorrow. See how our Saviour dropped his dignity, and humbled himself even to the death of the Cross: Thus convinced, we should carry ourselves to our inferiors with a complacency that proved the Christian and the Man, a lover of Christ and compassionate observer of mankind. What have we poor creatures to boast of, that we should be proud, and lord it over others? Nothing, alas! to recommend us, only sin to condemn us: And if that be made the subject

subject of pride, (which is the case of some who glory in their shame) then farewell Christianity, reason, and every good principle. Has the wretch in the dungeon, who is loaded with irons and infamy, and has no prospect before him but death, has he reason to be proud? Has man, who lives at the mercy of God, and is every day striving to wear that out, whose original is the dirt he treads under his feet, and can call nothing his own but misery, has he the least inducement to be proud? No; let him continually humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and fear to offend.

We must not only be humble, but meek and lowly; not take offence at every little trifling insult that may at any time be offered, but pity the weakness of mankind, and suppress every rising of the spirit: This we must do in imitation of Christ. How frequently was he affronted by the insolence of the Jews, and yet how patiently he suffered such indignities, and prayed his Father to forgive them, because they knew not what they did. We should be rather willing to make allowance for the failings of all, than to take one single step to exaggerate their offences. Consider
how

how small is the greatest offence against us, and how large is the smallest against God; yet he overlooks our failings, views them with an eye of compassion, and receives us through his Son's arms into his own fatherly bosom. If his mercy were not very great, and if he acted entirely agreeable to his justice; if he were "extreme to mark what we daily do amiss," what would become of us? But happily he has placed it in our power to arrest his arm, by making our forgiveness of others the condition of his. We must then "be meek, tender-hearted, and forgive one another:" He has fixed this condition upon us on purpose to restrain the malignancy of our nature, and so by degrees make us fit for Heaven, where no resentment or malice can possibly dwell. Consider what our Saviour has done for you; take the sacred volume into your hands, infuse it into your minds, digest it in your hearts, and so learn your duty: Read it not as a task, peruse it not as a novel, but every page where the merits of Christ are insisted upon, cast your eye upon it with reverence, and apply it with diligence and zeal. Now and then stop and reflect, strengthen the influence of the

the doctrine by your own meditations, and let every precept have it's due weight upon your resolutions. Read such passages as describe the love of our Redeemer, till you grow fond of them, and admire them with rapture. Consider yourselves as criminals, and the word of God, under the second covenant, as your reprieve ; learn to value it in that joyous light, as containing your ransom and deliverance. Though our Saviour was equally both God and Man, yet use yourselves to meditate more upon his Godhead than his manhood, lest by degrees you might be led to entertain (which too many in this age do) too mean an opinion of his sufferings: For if your minds once adopt these tenets, the superlative excellence of all his precepts, and the pleading efficacy of his sacrifice, must fail of their due effect. All the most tender offices of a father, a brother, a friend, we should unite in the person of our Saviour as *Man*, and magnify them in our own minds as distinguished by the perfections of a *God*. When at any time the insolent world shall have injured, or even insulted us, we should argue thus with ourselves: What offence is there that a man
can

can commit against me, which is equal to the smallest of mine against God? What am I that I should condemn, whom God has justified? Shall I presume to hate that flesh which Christ loves, and for which he even died? As Christ has received all, even the most unworthy, to himself upon true repentance, shall I reject a person who perhaps has hurt me no farther than piquing my pride? Does the Gospel teach me so to act? Did the passages I lately read therein direct me to be peevish, morose, malicious, and revengeful? Do they not rather tell me to forgive others, as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me? Thus by our reasonings we should be softened in our tempers, and by degrees, from an opposite turn, be mellowed down into peace and good-will. By these silent remonstrances we shall render our consciences capable of the slightest alarm, our sensibility will be wonderfully awakened, and every social affection will renew its native vigour. Those good principles of social feelings, which have been overborne by the tide of degeneracy and corruption, will vigorously rear their heads, and flourish in the full exertion of benevolence and love.

Cease

Cease then to cherish that ill-nature and supercilious deportment which distinguishes this inhuman, this anti-christian age; and though it may be unfashionable, dilate your souls wide to every sentiment of tenderness, and learn the doctrine, the golden doctrine of mutual forgiveness. Be persuaded that no man with rancour in his heart can ever inherit the kingdom of Christ. He cannot but love his own, but those who are so unlike himself he can never receive: They must go into outer darkness, where envy, malice, resentment, and revenge, eternally dwell, as punishments to themselves. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," says our Saviour; "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest in your souls." So that we see that this rest is promised to such as are of an humble spirit, to those who breathe the practice of Christian charity, not to those who study to find fault on purpose to punish, and seek occasions of offence on purpose to enjoy the brutish satisfaction of a violent return. Things should be maturely weighed; those may not always be intended which appear as injuries; and the uncharitable temper is too apt to
create

create an offence out of nothing at all: So that an innocent person may often suffer from such judgment and conduct, and the revengeful man prosecutes mischief only for mischief's sake. Let us, every morning, before we go into the world, candidly examine our own hearts: If we discover any rancorous principle, pluck it out before it take too deep root, and spread itself, like a bramble, over our whole soul. I tell you, you can never be fit for Heaven, so long as the least branch twines about your inclinations, and so bind down your better part to a slavish service of the Devil.

7 DE61

S E R M O N V.

HEBREWS, CHAP. X. VER. 25.

*“ Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves
 “ together, as the manner of some is, but
 “ exhorting one another : And so much the
 “ more, as ye see the Day approaching.”*

WHILST our blessed Saviour was here upon earth, upon the grand errand of our redemption, and to fulfil the obedience of the law for man ; for miserable, wretched, and impotent mortals ; we often read of him delivering his Father's will, and the terms of the new dispensation, which he was about to establish, to a numerous and crowded audience, to multitudes of people collected from all parts of the country, and to some whose temporal distinction gave no small sanction to the precepts which he taught.

Whether tempted by curiosity (as the itch after novelty is a predominant passion of human nature) or moved by a principle more commendable, as well as more profitable, they often gathered so thick upon him, that he was obliged to retire into a ship to teach them: In short, whatever place he possessed, or whatever time he was seen, he was always either expounding the law, or coping with the prejudices of a disaffected nation, or administering relief to the diseased and unhappy. This was the constant tenor of his conduct, whilst he inhabited this vale of miseries: His doctrines were attended with power, his example was gilded with attractive influence, and his whole life was one continued scene of purity, beneficence, and sympathy: Who then under such a shepherd would not quietly feed in the pasture of comfort? Who under such a master would not tamely, nay, joyfully submit his neck to the easy yoke of Christian obedience? And who under such a deliverer would not "praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth to the children of men?"

The Apostles, our Lord's successors, to whom he committed the care of our most holy religion,

religion, in whom he vested the power of working miracles for it's support and confirmation, and on whom the gift of tongues was poured on the day of Pentecost, that among other reasons it's progress might not be impeded in foreign parts, were not less diligent in the discharge of their trust after their master's final consummation on earth. For immediately after his local and visible ascension into Heaven, " they all continued " with one accord in prayer and supplication : " They were daily found in the Temple, exercising their functions after the most strenuous manner, and adhering stedfastly to sound doctrine and strict fellowship with each other. Out of the numbers which were daily added to the Church, and in quest of the peaceful harbour of the Gospel rolled down the boisterous torrent of zealous piety and laudable emulation, were some chosen and approved, on whom they laid their hands, and conferred the ministry of the new dispensation. Then, instead of the last day of the week, which was the Jewish Sabbath, instituted in memory of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, was preferred the first day, the day on which

our Lord arose from the dead, on which he delivered us from the vassalage of sin, and had accomplished the offices both of prophet and priest. They constantly, and without the least variation, came together on this day "to break bread" (which was the grand criterion of their Christian assemblies) to offer their prayers to God their triumphant Master, in the public congregation, to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel to all, more especially the poor; and, when occasion required, to make contributions for the relief of the saints in distress.

Thus early did the duty of assembling together on the Lord's day derive it's sanction, and receive it's existence. Whilst our Divine Master laboured under the incumbrance of the flesh, there was no particular day set apart for this now-incumbent duty, because he was "Lord of the Sabbath," and because the great and glorious act of resurrection, which our Sunday now commemorates, was not then fulfilled; but yet before he took his leave of his faithful disciples, and divested himself of that human nature in which he had suffered and conquered death, he recommended the practice, saying, "Where two
" or

" or three are gathered together, there am
 " I in the midst of you : " *i. e.* In whatever
 place, or at whatever time, you come toge-
 ther to commemorate my passion, and to
 advance the welfare of my kingdom, though
 I am and will always, and in all places, be
 with you unto the end, yet I will manifest
 myself more particularly in such a case, will
 enlighten your understandings, will direct
 your wills, and breathe upon you fresh sup-
 plies of the Holy Spirit. Agreeably to this,
 the Scriptures are very explicit in pointing
 out the example of the Apostles upon this
 head, and how tenaciously they adhered to
 the desire, the command of their beloved
 Lord and tender Master : For " the same day
 " at evening," being the day of our Lord's
 resurrection, and the first day in the week,
 " the disciples were assembled together in
 " private, the doors being shut for fear of
 " the Jews," lest they who were such obsti-
 nate and inveterate enemies to the Christian
 cause, who were so maliciously determined to
 extirpate it, and whom nothing but the blood
 of martyrs could appease, lest they should
 brandish the weapons of their fury, hurl
 down the pillars of the Church, and destroy,
 as

as well as the chief corner stone, every other part, " so fitly framed together to become " an holy temple to the Lord."

If we proceed further, we shall find that History is by no means silent upon this subject, but observes, that in every age and every century, through all the changes that have happened, and innovations that have been introduced into the Church, this point still remains unquestioned and undoubted: They all agree (except the dispersed Jews who still assert the observance of the Mosai-cal law) that the first day of the week is the time on which each sect, according to their different methods and modes of worship, ought to pay homage to their Creator and Redeemer. Not that I would be here understood to mean that other days are not to be employed to the same noble end and laudable purpose: No; we ought always to live under a due sense of God's Providence, of his favour, of his power, and of his goodness, in granting us a necessary supply of our wants; not only to offer up our prayers and praises in publick on Sunday (a day on which business is forbidden, and rest enjoined on purpose to give us an opportunity of discharging

charging our duty) but every day in private, both morning and evening, to laud and magnify the Lord for our creation and constant preservation; for our sustenance by day, and our rest at night: for his tender mercy in forgiving our daily, nay, hourly miscarriages; and for his inestimable goodness in redeeming our forfeited souls from the jaws of eternal death, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The duty of attending divine service on the Lord's Day, is recommended and enjoined by our Lord himself; is practised and enforced by the Apostles, who were holy, just, and exemplary men; and confirmed by the concurrent testimony of all ages, since its first original and primitive institution.

How then can we, to whom the righteousness of God is revealed, to whom the sacred oracles are committed, who have received so great mercies and repeated favours at his hands, and who are honoured with the superior and incomparable fame of the Captain of our Salvation, how can we be so stupid and negligent, act so ungratefully and unworthily of the heavenly calling? Is the righteousness of God, to be imputed to us by our dear Lord and blessed Saviour, a matter so cheap

cheap and inconsiderable? Is the Majesty of God, is the supreme excellence of the divine nature, become a concern so indifferent or contemptible? Is the New Testament, that sum of our duty, and which, if attended to, would safely direct us to Heaven, fallen into disesteem and sunk into prostitution? Shall a novel, a romance, or the excrescent sports of a chimerical brain, gain the vile ascendant over these solid and substantial truths? Is ingratitude, that odious, that detestable name, become so much the universal principle of the age? Shall that so far influence us as to turn blessings into curses, and the favours of Heaven into instruments of vengeance? Is Christianity, that noblest of all religions, that index of Heaven's will, no more than a name amongst us? Is it the bare sound of Christianity, is it the mere privilege of being called a Christian, that will answer the end of the Gospel, and discharge its terms? Oh, vain Man! why dost thou thus amuse and deceive thyself? Hast thou no infirmities to be healed, no wants to be relieved, no sins to be pardoned? Hast thou received no favours that merit thy thanks? Ah! infirmities we have, and many, therefore we must not presume to
suppose

suppose ourselves perfect: We labour under grievous and perpetual wants, and therefore must not once suppose ourselves all-sufficient: And we are overwhelmed with floods of sins, both of evil and punishment, which, without thy atonement, O Jesus, and thy pardon, O merciful Father, must inevitably plunge us into the horrible pit of dire destruction. As for the favours of Heaven, for which we ought to be thankful, and the false estimation of which can proceed only from rank pride and empty conceit, how can we, thus acting, flatter ourselves with the continuance of the least of them? What is it that causes "the grass to grow upon the mountains, "green herb and corn for the service of "men?" Even nothing less than the gracious fertility of a benign Providence. What is it that teaches the animal to engender for the use of man? Even the care of our provident Father, who first produced us out of nothing, and can in an instant annihilate the nothingness of our arrogant presumption. Who is it that bade death look pleasant, and humbled that imperious Prince of Terrors; who enervated the gates of hell, and rescued us from the dominion of the old usurper? Even he that
said,

said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; even he, "whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light." And what? Can we, will we call these gracious acts of condescension, nothing? What construction shall we pass upon them? Have we never yet thought them worth our consideration? If not, let us rouse out of this lethargic state, shake off the scales of error from our eyes, and be convinced that they are favours; such blessings, such acts of tenderness and benignity as man could never hope for, and heaven alone could bestow. Let us not imagine that Christianity is a fashion, that it is a piece of state-policy or an invention of priestcraft. No; it comprehends duties which our heavenly Father enjoins us, which Christ himself intreats us to perform, and which none but Freethinkers or desperate Jews would wish to evade: It is a state of union with our Redeemer and communion with each other: But how can we expect to enjoy the benefits of it, when we will not dedicate one day out of seven to the service of our great benefactor? When, instead of perusing the Scriptures, the sacred repository of such an heavenly boon, we are giving loose to those pastimes which invention itself, commonly

monly too fertile, has been tortured to supply; and when, instead of attending divine service, which would only rob us (I speak after the manner of men) of a small part of that time which we squander away in cultivating depravity and the corruption of the flesh, more may be seen gratifying the thirst, the habitual thirst of the body, than even considering that thirst after righteousness which the soul naturally feels, though by long practice cramped in her exertions. We should any of us be grossly offended were we stigmatized by the names of fools or madmen: But what person that will give himself the least time to reflect, who will in the least exert his rational powers, would not but conclude that we are either or both? For is it not the greatest folly imaginable (it would be so deemed in temporal affairs) to reject the offer of an immortal crown upon conditions both easy, natural, and most agreeable to our present tranquility? Is it not the highest degree of madness for us to court the delusive face of danger, and absolutely oppose our own safety, to throw ourselves headlong down the deep precipice of horror, and dash our weak heads against the craggy rocks of eternal perdition?

perdition? Turn yourselves, therefore, and repent: Quit the paths of iniquity before it be too late; while the sword of justice is still sheathed, and the tenacious scabbard contains the deadly blade; for “why will ye die, O “House of Israel?” Why will you heap vengeance upon vengeance against the Day of the Lord? Why will you provoke your Maker to pour out the vials of his wrath upon you? Why will you cause your death (which may be to-morrow, to-day, the next hour, nay, this very moment) to be your inexorable ruin and implacable condemnation, without hope, without redemption, and without a God? For now, to-day, whilst it is called to-day, it is high time to awake out of sleep; the day of judgment is now nearer than when ye first believed, or pretended to believe; and each succeeding day constitutes a part of our guilty time; time marked by misery, pregnant with disobedience, and now, alas! now hastening to be no more.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

ST. JOHN, CHAP. XVI. PART OF VER. 33.

*“ In the World ye shall have Tribulation ; but
 “ be of good cheer, I have overcome the
 “ World.”*

WHAT our Saviour here particularly says to his Disciples was literally verified in the hardships they underwent, and the persecutions they suffered : But the same words, in a general view, are applicable to the whole race of mankind. Every man that has trodden this stage of life, however favoured by an happy train of circumstances, can witness to this fatal truth. We too often indeed create misery to ourselves, and by our imprudences and indiscretions generate that folly which we charge upon others, and sometimes

times upon Providence itself. Various are the causes which produce our misfortunes, but upon our impartial survey, we shall find that our passions are the handmaids to our woe. We are all possessed of appetites and passions in a general degree; but some more than others become dupes to their ascendancy. They are indeed necessary to that active vigour of life which is connatural to such a compound creature as Man: Without them, even the sanctions of the Gospel would lose their influence, and appear either as the crude, indigested tenets of heathen philosophy, or the fictions of a distempered brain; but by the stimulus of our passions, which feel themselves attacked in all the various shapes of hope and fear; they strike us home with conviction, and animate us to practice.

But however necessary they be to the discharge of social as well as religious obligations, yet the misfortune is, that the best things in the world abused generally become the worst. What devastations the tyranny of ungoverned passions have in various ages effected, history too faithfully records: But why should we consult history or antiquity, when we may daily advert to many instances
which

which our respective individual concerns present us with? Though all men have the same passions in some degree, yet every man carries one in his bosom to which he particularly leans, and to which the rest are rendered subservient: If it happens to be of a turbulent nature, the storms which it produces render the mind like the troubled sea, restless, convulsed, and in perpetual disquietude. Or, if it partake of a softer, more tender nature, the ranklings of the pointed dart continually corrode our peace, and render us a prey to the most tormenting impulse. They both hold us in captivity; the one exhibits us a public spectacle of ridicule and contempt, whereas the other in silence consumes the man. Thus our souls, like a ship blown away by a sudden gust of wind, or rapidly absorbed in a vortex, disobey the power of either helm or anchor, and so suffer a continual shipwreck.

But, as if the corruption and imbecillity of human nature were not alone sufficient to embitter our happiness, the Devil is always at hand to betray us into sin. He accommodates his temptations to our favourite and idol passion, and throws the beloved object in our

way when we are least able to resist its charms. Whence arise those evil thoughts which interfere with our most serious exercises of prayer and meditation but from the suggestion of that wicked one, who is at enmity with man's redemption, and constantly strives to defeat its design? If avarice be our turn, how often are we tempted, by insensible steps, to move on from what is barely lawful, to that which is merely sinful, until by habit and false reasoning we reconcile ourselves to the principle, still make larger and larger strides, till many by the laws of the land have fallen victims upon the fatal tree. The boundary is so small between virtue and vice, that the tempter often finds it his interest to perplex and make it doubtful, by subtle impressions upon the brain, by discolouring the object, or by a foul attack upon our most unguarded and defenceless part. If anger be our turn, he softly whispers into our ear that anger is manly, that the nature of the offence is such as to require chastisement, that a man of spirit cannot pocket an indignity, till at last we are persuaded that to take away the life of man, whom we have forced upon self defence, is only manslaughter, not murder. But yet there

there are difficulties and troubles attendant upon such steps, and though the culprit may for the present be satisfied with his own conduct, yet when the Devil has left him, and those gay festive hours which administered fuel to his passion are past and gone, he finds himself distracted by a thousand agonizing reflections, which eclipse the sunshine of his future days, and involve him in the darkness of the blackest guilt. Even men of the strictest principles, who have been always chronicled as paragons of virtue, and whom the mouth of fame has never dared to calumniate, have suddenly astonished the world with some base act, have yielded to the flattery of temptation, and so wounded domestic tranquility, the wife's bosom, and the children's comfort.

To expect perfect happiness here, and that we shall calmly and uninterruptedly glide down the stream of pleasure, without any obstructions in our way, is the mere vision of fancy, and the picture of inexperience. Supposing our virtue impregnable, either by the force of depravity, or the delusions of Satan, yet tribulation must arise from the nature of the world in which we sojourn: Either the violence of lawless men, the frauds of the

more secret villain, or the crafty designs of the smooth-faced hypocrite, will necessarily trouble our waters. How many are there who, distinguished only in form from the brute, adopt the growling of the bear, the ferocity of the tyger, but forget the generosity of the lion? How many with knavish insinuations wriggle themselves into our blind favour, merely to catch the foul opportunity of giving a more vital stab than the assassin's dagger? How often do the cold returns of affection, the stifled sigh, the fruitless wish, the sickening hope, darken the scene, and render us monuments of affliction? Even friendship itself, that Gilead-balm which usually delights to soothe the wounds of adversity, now forgets to heal, hardens itself against the soft, thrilling passion of pity, and suppresses the yearnings of its own bowels. As nothing certainly contributes more to the alleviation of our distresses than the warm, sympathetic aid of friendship, so nothing more heightens our misery than the indifference and cold neglect of those whose social habits have taught us to expect some kindness. But friendship, alas! is now-a-days become the favourite foot-ball of fortune, kicked up and
down

down upon her scornful toe at pleasure : Her devotees make the strongest claim to the attention of the world, but of that part of it only who are governed more by avarice, ostentation, or such dirty principles, than that true benevolence which constitutes the man and the Christian. But pride, that noxious weed, which is found to thrive most in barren soil, as well as fortune which is too often the lot of fools, equally starve the cultivation of true friendship, by imbibing that nourishment which is peculiarly congenial to the growth of virtue ; where pride fixes its highest eminence in doing all possible good, whilst fortune feels herself best employed in lending an hand to the generous purpose : “ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put “ any confidence in man.”

Corroded by misfortunes, harassed by disappointments, and tossed in the tumultuous hurricane of life, we should often fall victims to despondency, did not our Saviour’s cheerful voice revive our drooping spirits, lift us up from the gulph of sorrow, and bid us not despair ? His incarnation, his temptations, his passion, his resurrection, are all pledged for our happiness : After having waded through

a sea of distresses (which more afflicted his soul from possessing a divine sensibility) conscious of the infirmity of man, and how incapable of stemming the torrent of human perplexity, he says, "be of good cheer;" how joyous the sound! How elastic in its nature to spring us up to hope! You then, who have not hitherto attuned your souls to heavenly musick, listen to its notes and feel the comfortable impulse, rejoice at this friendly, this pathetic address, "Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But, "*He has overcome the World.*" In his prophetic office our Saviour exceeded all that was ever thought or written by the most profound philosopher, or the most learned Rabbi: He astonished and put to silence the self-sufficient Scribe, the bloated Pharisee, and the insidious Herodian. By his miracles he so far surpassed all the powers of nature, as, in spite of all their prejudices, to bring his divine power home to their senses: And though it was "expedient that one man should die for the people," yet in many instances he defeated the wicked purposes of his enemies, the Jews.

As

As a priest he more particularly overcame the world by exhibiting himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, and so convincing us that the scheme of Redemption, so firmly established in the purpose of God, must be completed. By dying he proved himself *man*, by rising again he shewed himself to be *God* : He destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the Devil, and put all his magical operations out of countenance : He sufficiently rebuked his arrogant insult, which he offered in his temptation of him, by saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

In his regal capacity "He puts all things under his feet," sits superior to all principalities and powers, and, by the assistance of the Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, at this day checks the progress which the infernal powers are ever struggling to make, by exciting us to do good, preventing us from doing evil, and comforting us under all the tribulations, trials, and difficulties, which at any time oppress us. Do the violence, the warmth, the impetuosity of our passions foil our strength, and so threaten us with evils of various complexions, and the largest size? He whom even "the winds and the sea
"obey,"

“obey,” can say to them, “Peace, be still,” and there will be a great calm. Does Satan at any time, by his subtle artifices and soft insinuations, by the riches and pleasures of this life, by the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, so dazzle our understandings, as to bribe our judgment, and cause us to err? He who dismissed the whole legion of evil spirits, and caused them to perish, “will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” Is the friendship of this world grown so cold that the cheerless face of modest worth, bedewed with tears of distress, in vain pours forth its complaints, in vain solicits that relief which the bold, the daring, the vicious, plentifully share? That philanthropy, which so eminently distinguished our Saviour’s incarnation, will give us the bread of life, the living water, those perennial comforts which can be tasted only by his true disciples.

If then we wish to unsting the miseries of life, we must fix our firm affiance upon our Saviour, who by his death has conquered every power that can hurt and annoy us.

“yes do”

And

And though, while we are loaded with this house of clay, we must expect to meet with crosses and disappointments, yet we are sure of this, that if we copy the pattern of our Saviour's life, we shall become partakers of his resurrection. This then is our glory, this is the Christian's hope, that when this world and all its appendages shall be dissolved, we shall rise again and survive that general wreck. "Thanks be to God then, who
 "giveth us this victory, through our Lord
 "Jesus Christ." It becomes us, therefore,
 "to be steadfast, immovable, always abound-
 "ing in the work of the Lord, knowing that
 "our labour will not be in vain in the Lord."

SERMON

And though while we are loaded with this
host of cares, we must expect to meet with
crosses and disappointments, yet we are sure
of this, that if we copy the pattern of our
Saviour's life, we shall become partakers of
his resurrection. This day is our glory,
this is the Christian's hope, that when this
world and all its appendages shall be laid low,
we shall rise again and receive that general
witness, "I thank thee O God, who
gavest us this victory, through our Lord
Jesus Christ." It becomes us, therefore,
who bear this honorable, glorious burden,
to magnify the work of the Lord, knowing that
"our labour will not be in vain in the Lord."

S E R M O N VII.

ST. JOHN, CHAP. VIII. PART OF VER. 7.

*“He that is without sin among you, let him first
“cast a stone.”*

THIS passage is so plain, written in such large and legible characters, that the diligent reader cannot overlook, nor the insidious one misconstrue it. It is astonishing that any one, who peruses these words, should not be led to “set a watch before the door of his lips,” that his mouth might not offend: But how little they are attended to will appear from that general practice of calumny, which has marked every age, but distinguishes the present.

Those, whose infirmities of old age or debility of youth have forced them upon the
reluctant

reluctant task of taking their last farewell of gratification, these condemn the gaieties, perhaps the little follies, nay other natural appendages of youth; whilst others, who are braced up by the athletic muscles of strength and vigour, and thence have a secret, sympathetic aid to the mind, on that account rise superior to the base, the illiberal idea of a fictitious character: Such exalted spirits as these call in question the hypocrisy of the nominal reformer, and naturally conclude that some cunning, little dissembling passion, prompts behind the curtain. What pity it is, and how must it wound true religion to reflect, that those very people that are so prone to censure, are those who constantly attend the church, as if they met there on purpose for chit chat, and as if by such attention they were entitled to take up the words of the Pharisee and say, "I thank God I am not as other men are," who kneel when others kneel, and stand when others stand, only (if we may be allowed to judge from their daily breach of Christian charity) as fashion dictates; and who in time of prayer use their fans 'tis true, but for what? perhaps as a partial shelter to a wandering eye, the last surviving relick
of

of a jaded, hackneyed passion. They have ran their race and can run no longer: necessity puts them upon a course of religion, only a feature indeed, a borrowed feature of religion, which, confessedly both by moralists and divines, is only a negative virtue, having neither choice for its motive, nor prudence, real prudence, for its guide.

The Gospel informs us, that those persons, who arraigned the adulterous woman before our Saviour, were Scribes and Pharisees, a set of men who paid great attention to the external and superficial parts of their law, to the neglect of its internal and essential duties. They quoted the rigorous sentence of their great legislator Moses, unwilling to be taught that mercy marked the new, as judgment did the old dispensation, and little suspecting that the decision would retort upon their own consciences. Now the people of these days are equally Pharisees, alike attentive to forms, and justly reprehensible upon our Saviour's principle.

To apply the appeal then, who is there that is without sin? Not one. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves;" if we speak peace to ourselves when there is no peace; if we delude ourselves

selves into a notion of our own innocence,
 whilst *original sin* unatoned for, and our
 actual sins unrepented of, stare us in the
 face, our souls are in a very bad state.
 All of us, the best of us all, if we examine
 our own hearts, must shudder at the scru-
 tiny; the imperfection of human nature can-
 not bear the test. Sins of omission, sins of
 commission, sins of ignorance, sins of infir-
 mity, sins of presumption, and habitual sins,
 lay so close a siege to the soul, at every weak,
 every defenceless avenue, that we cannot live
 a single day without offence.

Human nature takes its course through
 different channels, and though we are not all
 liars, all swearers, all drunkards, all knaves,
 in our common dealings, yet I will venture
 to affirm that every man has his darling vice
 or foible, that sin which does so easily "beset
 us," and which being born in our respec-
 tive frames, we nourish with a fostering hand
 in our lives, to prove it constitutional, and
 that the mode of our depravity is governed
 by the changes wrought in our constitutions,
 how many are there who, in the heat of
 youth, live gay, licentious lives, and spare no
 expence to gratify their appetite, and who,

-our obdurate hearts; if we delude
 ourselves

the sun decline, become wretched, miserable, and avaricious ! The appetite being cloyed, the object is changed, and he, who before was a debauchee, is now become what the Scripture terms an idolater : And will any one argue that he is a better man, because he can no longer pursue his favourite pleasure, and has adopted another much more criminal ? For avarice has nothing natural to plead in its favour, whilst other vices may carry with them an argument, which most in the early stages of life can witness to, and the candid will always confess.

Do not mistake me : I am not here arguing in defence of any vice ; God forbid that Sermons should be prostituted to the shameful purpose of vindicating error, or of apologizing for vicious acts : I only wish to shew that those severe prudes in religion, who willingly persuade the world to believe their great purity, and every day so freely censure others, have still their own idols set up in their hearts, and though they have changed the name and nature of their vice, have not perhaps extenuated their guilt. It is true, the human heart is known only to God, and whilst the face of a man shines with the lustre
of

of affectation, he may still be "in the gall of
 "bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Our estimates of mankind are often very delusive: A man of a saturnine, phlegmatic turn, whose fancy lights not up the torch of the intellect, and deigns not one single gleam of light to the whole gloomy cell, and yet who has just sense enough to array ignorance in the formal dress of gravity, this man is called serious and well-disposed; and why? For the best reason in the world, because nature has turned him up a blank. Others, on the contrary, of a volatile and sanguine complexion, whose ideas are enlivened by flashes from a stronger ray, and who are generously chearful, but scorn to borrow a name, by appearing even one moment in masquerade, these are called gay, dissolute and licentious. A little attention to human nature, and her secret, subtle workings, will very easily inform us, that degeneracy, though covered by the veil of dissimulation, will, through some crevice, betray its deformity; and that prudence (that abused virtue, which is often made to pimp to the baseness of the heart) does but ill-conceal its latent corruption. With what indignation and contempt
 then

then must we look upon those, who, whilst they pretend to the exercise of all religious offices, still violate the law, the great law of charity, and commit perhaps more sin with their mouths, than could possibly, in their station of life, perhaps, proceed from their hands.

The merits of a Saviour ground our faith; the promises of the Gospel afford us hope; but what says St. Paul? "Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity;" not the giving of alms, as some construe the word, and thence idly hope to "cover a multitude of sins," but that noble expanded benevolence of soul, which, whilst it hates the guilt, still mourns the man. How then can persons reconcile their conduct to this grand principle of action, who, with the breath of malevolence, poison the reputation of all around them; who vainly presume upon God's forgiveness, and yet refuse one tender, one benevolent sentiment towards their fellow-creatures, and who at the last great impartial day will in vain exhibit their supposed virtue and merit; *in vain*, because they now run counter to the example of our Saviour's mercy, and turn a deaf ear to all his

precepts of love and unity. It is natural and too common for the world to imagine that they have a right of giving licence to their tongues, and traducing the persons and concerns of whom they please; but my text, I think, plainly illustrates, that while we have faults and vices of our own, it ill becomes us to exercise our chastisement upon those of others. What says our Saviour? "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou will see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." This is a rule which he himself lays down for our conduct in such cases; and it must be mere hypocrisy to pretend zeal for the amendment of others, while we have none, adopt no means for the purgation of our own faults: And when the springs be thus corrupted, what can we expect but that they should send forth foul and dirty waters," which will bespatter the garment of our neighbour, and often (though outwardly only) sully a character more virtuous than our own.

It is incumbent then upon all those who are infected with this itch of tittle-tattle, and love to indulge themselves in gossiping conversation, to turn their eye in upon their own souls,

souls, and there see whether they cannot discover some black spots that deface the virtuous character. Let them candidly and impartially examine their own hearts, and if they there find the least fibre of malevolence, or of a rancorous principle, "pluck it away and cast it from them," before it take too deep root, and so fasten them down in everlasting horrors. Our hearts are deceitful above measure, and will therefore afford sufficient employ in developing its secret recesses, and probing the core to the bottom: And, if we heartily set about this great business, we shall find very little leisure, and at length less inclination, to attend to the faults of others. We must all act for ourselves, stand upon our own bottom; how absurd is it then for us to set up a tribunal before which we cannot bring the criminal, and how impious to pretend to condemn those whom perhaps Christ "has justified," or to be advocates for those whom he may see reason to condemn. "Judge nothing therefore before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then," no doubt, shall many, who are

now abused, vilified, and traduced by men,
 “ have praise of God.”

Charity binds me to hope that there are some, who, from a real relish for goodness, and a true affection for virtue, seriously bewail the vices and follies of mankind, but that in a manner which displays the motive, the unfeigned goodness of heart ; but more there are, I fear, who are so evil-minded as to find faults, not with a view to amend them, but to indulge a savage inclination of giving pain, and who, for want of a reputation of their own, raise one upon the ruins of others. These may not uncharitably be stiled the Devil’s agents, whose leading principle, like that of his, receives its name from slander and calumny : It has been his practice to gloss the worst, and depreciate the best virtues : In his seduction of Eve (the unhappy parent of all our woes) he represents God as a tyrant, ruling them harshly, and depriving them of the first sweets of Paradise, tempts them with alluring promises, and so damns mankind. In like manner do his emissaries here on Earth, when then they hear of a character that stands fair in the public opinion, spurred on by envy, by two or three *supposes*, with hawk-

hawk-eyed scrutiny, they at last discover some base motive for its conduct, which the liberal mind never sought, and is unwilling to find out.

You then, who have hitherto been warring against your true interest, and have strayed from the flowery paths of justice, candour, and honour, into the thorny wilderness of treachery, dishonour, and injustice, stand awhile and listen to the voice of reason and religion. We all know that the awful moment must arrive (and that perhaps very soon) in which every finessè will be unveiled, every deceit unmasked, and things appear in their naked and genuine colours. How ridiculous then, to carry on a farce, whose ultimate issue may be the next hour, and when the conscience, hitherto lulled into a sinful lethargy, shall awake from its stupor, rear its hissing head, and make its tyrant tremble? But let us further remember, that after Death comes judgment, that general audit in which the uncharitable heart, above all others, shall be consigned to the tormentors, till it can pay all that is due to its neglected God and the injured World.

back-eyed learning, they at last discover
some late motive for its conduct, which is
liberal and not for the sake of its meddling
to hinder it.
You think, who have hindered your own
ing against your own interest and interest
from the theory of justice, contains
and below, into the theory which is in
teaching, philosophy, and in the same
while and after to the voice of reason and
religion. We all know that the world is
not only true (and that is the only
fact) in which every thing will be revealed
every doubt, and things appear in
their naked and essential colour. How this
unknown to carry on a race, who will
suffer it to be the next hour, and when
the conscience, which is called into a trial
before, shall awake from its sleep, and
in rising, shall make its own trumpet
but let us suppose that the conscience, which is
more significant, that general notion, which
mechanical heart, above all others, shall
be conformed to the conscience, and it will
all that is due to its neglected God and the
humanity of the world.

S E R M O N VIII.

2 SAMUEL, CHAP. XIV. PART OF VER. 14.

*"For we must needs die, and are as water
 "spilt upon the ground, which cannot be ga-
 "thered up again: Neither doth God respect
 "any person."*

THOUGH in the whole circle of truths there is not one that carries with it greater certainty than this, yet there is none, on the contrary, so little favoured by the attention of mankind. Notwithstanding the numerous instances which every day presents of human mortality, yet by a sort of dire infatuation the familiarity produces a neglect, and every one, by a peculiar vanity, calculates a mighty distance from the grave. Even those

those impressions, alas! which, one would imagine, should fix themselves upon the most treacherous memory, we find very soon erased, and the facts buried in the silent caverns of oblivion. Those fatal and sudden incidents which at first make our very ears tingle, give a sting to our wonder, and add horror to astonishment, even those soon take wing, and leave our minds barren, uncultivated, and unimproved. But "people will not consider," says God; some darling appetite, some attractive foible, with its delusive appearance, shall dazzle the eye of reason, and spread a mist over the understanding: The various avocations of life, its amusements, its advantages, and the whole tribe of secular concerns, too often silence the whispers of conscience, and lull the soul into a state of insensibility itself. Love, Ambition, Envy, and Avarice, will take their turns in their succeeding stages, and present us with their favourites in imposing lights. The excess, sometimes of one passion, sometimes of another, so feast our corrupt desires, as to render us totally devoted to our very bane, imagining (if we think at all) that the chance of a little spare time will be sufficient for the
soul,

soul, and that death with slow advances comes hobbling far behind.

But after all our care and solicitude, our anxiety and inquietude about temporal things, about the goods of a sublunary nature, what is our life? At the longest how short! and at the strongest how frail! At the sweetest how bitter, and at the purest how full of alloy! It is even a vapour, a bubble, that is nothing'd by the blasting of the breath of God's displeasure: All its imaginary pleasures, all its fallacious jollities, and all its collusive joys, like an arrow through the air, or the keel through the furrowed wave, leave nothing behind but turbulent commotions and gnawing reflections. Such frail and brittle things are our bodies, that every the least violence disturbs and unfits them for their operations: So dependent are they upon such a multitude of little parts, and these so subject to so many hurts and casualties, that the wonder is not how we come to die so soon, but how we continue to live so much as one day. Though the parts of our bodies are innumerable, and apparently some of them useless, yet if one of those slender veins or tender membranes, one of those little
nerves,

nerves and fibres, of which we are made, be either contracted, or extended beyond its due proportion, corroded by any sharp humour, broken, or but obstructed, immediately ensues a pain that affects the whole machine, and renders life a burden. The body is of so tender a constitution, so liable to accidents and disorders, costs so much pains to supply its wants, to preserve its health, to repair its decays, and to hinder it from dropping into dust, that a little reflection is much astonished at the value which the major part place upon this abject substance: But let them “remember that death will not be long in coming, and that the covenant of the grave is not shewed unto them;” that sooner or later it is a journey we must all take; and that with an impartial hand it visits the cottage of the peasant and the seat of the nobleman, pays no respect to the distinction of orders, nor spares any man for being great; but “he who is a king to-day, to-morrow shall die.” ’Tis not state pageantry that can awe him, ’tis not riches that can bribe his lenity, nor court flattery that can soothe the grim-faced terror; but all will be hurried indiscrimi-
nately

nately into the dismal regions, and leave their airy splendour for fools to feed on.

Those, who now pique themselves upon their possessions, and roll in the stately carriages of pride and self-conceit, who think it profane in the vulgar to gaze at them, and impudent to breathe the same air with themselves, even these demi-gods must own death their superior, and implicitly obey its imperious nod, like the poorest menial ; will then possess only a small portion of the earth, and be vested with no other privilege but that of rotting in a more glittering shell. Those, who are now bloated with ambition, and swell with presumptive ideas of false power, who grasp at every phantom of authority, and pant after imaginary greatness, even these Nebuchadnezzars must grow weak in the midst of their self-importance, and reluctantly quit the busy-body scene. “ Those who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters,” who have eluded the face of danger, outbraved every storm, and, as it were, almost insured immortality to themselves, even these hitherto fortunate men will at last be overtaken by the speedy wing of all-consuming time, and fall

fall the victims to the scythe of fate. Those, who are now blest with a robust symmetry of parts, whose strength seems equal to the severest task, and whose frame bids defiance to diseases and the lot of mortality, who are now cheerful and careless of the event of futurity, and who (if any) may promise to themselves a numerous length of days, even these monuments of health are sometimes cut off in the circle of gaiety, are mingled with their mother dust, and numbered in a few hours with the dead. Those, whose vigour of constitution has carried them beyond the common standard of human existence, who have "numbered their days" beyond ninety instead of seventy years, whom sickness has never invaded, nor diseases tortured, yet, nature being too weak to last for ever, insensibly glide into the forgetfulness of death, and the soul, though not driven out of the body, instantly flies at the call of the Almighty. Those, who are incessantly stretching out their arms to grasp that which they cannot keep, who are toiling to amass heaps of shining pelf, whose gold is their God, and their distended purses the sacred images of their devotions, even these money-getting idolaters,

ters, with all their riches, cannot purchase a moment's respite, but must instantly obey the mittimus of that stern monarch, and leave these their hopes to those who have spirit to use them. Those, whom Heaven favours with extraordinary powers of improved intellect, whose perception is clear, whose judgment is distinct, whose reason is forcible and memory retentive, who can dive into the mysteries of nature, can scan the perfection of the solar system, and who seem to be elevated above the standard of common mortals, yet these ornaments of the creation must sink under the decay of nature, must resign their spirits to him who gave them, and, like the comets of a day, must set in the darkness of death. Those, whom fortune has placed amidst the hazards of war, who have exposed their breasts to the pointed spear, and their bodies to the winged arrows of fate, who have been conversant with the carnage of thousands, and themselves preserved from the common havock, who seem privileged with an exemption from destiny, and have been delivered by hair breadth escapes, even these magnanimous heroes must fall, perhaps by an accident of the most trivial nature, so

convince

convince the world that "in the midst of life
 " we are only in death," and that when sur-
 rounded with its spoils we are not always in
 danger. Thus the purse-proud Croesus, the
 ambitious Alexander, the adventurous An-
 son, the mighty Sampson, the ingenious
 Newton, and the heroic Granby, all sink
 undistinguished into the pit of darkness, stript
 of the plumes of their borrowed eminence,
 foiled in their boasted strength, and nothing
 left but a carcase, the visible spoil of time,
 and the food of worms.

So short and uncertain is life, that our birth
 seems only a prelude to our funeral. Be-
 cause we at present enjoy the blessing of a
 perfect health, because we are blooming in
 our spring, and traced up by the vigour of
 youth, do we think therefore that death will
 never overtake us? Alas! vain man, why
 art thou so indiscreet in thy thoughts and rash
 in thy conclusions? Behold, fond man! see
 here thy pictured life: some few years pass,
 thy flowering spring, thy summer's strength,
 thy sober autumn fading into age, and pale
 concluding winter comes at last, and shuts
 the scene of thy vain existence. Ah! whi-
 ther now are fled those dreams of greatness;
 those

those unsolid hopes of happiness; those longings after fame; those restless cares; those busy, bustling days; those gay-spent festive nights; those veering thoughts lost between good and ill, that shared thy life? All now are vanished: Virtue, that never-failing friend of man and guide to happiness, now only survives this world of empty bubbles. The young may soon be snatched away in the half-span of their age; the middle aged will some time (how soon God only knows) be summoned to quit this stage of life: and the old, sick with infirmities and jaded by disorders, must resign their breath, and return to the womb of their mother Earth. Let every one therefore "take heed to their ways," lest in the very meridian of their summer-enjoyments, the nipping winter of death blasts all their blossomed hopes, and leaves them breathless and inanimate. For no age, no sex, no order, no distinction can escape the grasping hand of death, but the belle that shines in the pew shall be like treated to the ragged orphan that shivers in the aile, and shall all know and feel, that after this severe conflict betwixt mortality and the Prince of Terrors, ensues a fearful judgment.

A frequent

A frequent and attentive consideration of that moment which must put a period to all our schemes, and deprive us of all our acquisitions, cannot fail more justly to regulate our lives: Nor would half the vices and follies be undertaken and prosecuted by him who every morning opened his eyes with this reflection, that "*He was born to die.*" Every man has experienced the folly, the loathsomeness of all worldly enjoyments, when a sharp or tedious sickness has set death before his eyes: Even the most darling pleasures, the most favoured plans, and the most transporting foibles, have appeared vain and empty things, when the last hour seemed to be approaching; and the same appearance they would always wear if the same thought were always predominant: And surely that thought, which must be our last, and which the soul proves the truth of when she takes her leave of the body, ought so far to gain the ascendant as to root up all our confidence, and cut off every presumption.

Let him then who wallows in the midst of affluence, (for money seems to be too much the anchor of human hopes) who is arrived to the summit of his sordid wishes, and crowned
with

with the wreath of plenty, let him not wrap himself up in the brazen armour of a vain security ; let him not form to himself eternal schemes of happiness here ; but let him consider, that the day is far spent, and the night of his existence at hand, that the thread of his life at most is very short, and that he only truly lives who lives to die. Let the young, who now boast the tincture of a little white and red, whose personal perfections are their only care, and whose hopes are fed by the flattery of the glass, let them remember, that though so vain they are very frail, though adored yet very wretched, that limping age will steal upon them, that the hand of disease may before long expunge the bloom of their charms, and that fifteen, as well as threescore and ten, are alike the subjects of mortality. Let these few documents then sink down deep into your hearts, let them teach you a lesson never to be forgotten, and when at any time you cast your eyes upon a human corpse, let rambling youth, as well as hardened age, reflect, that before to-morrow's sun the strongest frame breathing may lie prostrate under the heavy hand of death, without having time to say, "*Lord, have*

mercy upon me." Let not therefore the appearance of health deceive us; let not the idea of bodily strength delude us; let not youth think it too soon, nor age too late, but one and all earnestly prepare to live in sincere and unfeigned repentance, leaning on the bosom of a Saviour, praying to be forgiven, and so ordering the few days of our conversation here, that our last end, whenever it arrives, may be in peace.

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. XVII. VER. 10.

*"When ye shall have done all those things
 " which are commanded you, say, We are
 " unprofitable servants: we have done that
 " which it was our duty to do."*

THERE is something in the nature of man that is apt to swell and puff him up with strange notions of himself, and high conceits of his own excellence and perfection: as pride was the unhappy cause of our fall, so it seems to be inseparable from our state, and to have infected all the generations of mankind. This deeply-rooted principle influences our whole lives, and tinctures even our very best performances: as it was the cause of our destruction, so it still continues

to be the source of innumerable evils and misfortunes: as it is destructive of virtue, so it becomes the bane of our happiness; the higher we rise in our imaginations, the greater will be our fall. Common observation proves incontrovertibly against it: every day shews that it mixes itself even with no common or ordinary action of life, but what is either frustrated or rendered fatal. It is the ruin of private families; the plague of commonwealths and societies; the overthrow of governments, and the desolation of the largest kingdoms and most flourishing empires.

Was the contagion to stop here; were our temporal concerns the only objects of its fury; were kingdoms and nations only destroyed by it, these, though certainly the greatest calamities of this life, comparatively are inconsiderable; but when it proceeds further and fix itself upon religion; when it deface virtue and turn its brightest beauties into the most ugly deformities; when it change the only, and most excellent means of our glory and happiness, into instruments of eternal shame and misery; in short, when it destroy our everlasting welfare, we then
incur

incur a species of misery which all the gratifications of pride can never heal or remunerate. This baneful principle then we too many of us not only cherish, but industriously cultivate: and our grand adversary works with a very fatal engine against us, when he tickle our hearts with pride, and render us (as he did our first unhappy parents) like gods in our own eyes.

To defeat this subtle enemy, our Saviour came down from Heaven; to make us sensible what vile and sinful creatures we are, and how we ought to humble ourselves before the God of Heaven, he descended from the habitation of his glory, took upon him the form of a servant, and stooped to death, even the ignominious death of the cross. All our actions are so far from being holy and good, that we are under such a curse as could never be removed but by him alone; our sins were so great that they could never be expiated, but by that sacrifice which he made of himself; by him, and through him only, we obtain the remission of our sins; and we must never forget that all our best works are rendered good and accepted by God, only through faith in his blood. That good

works are indispensably necessary to salvation, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is so fully and frequently expressed in the Gospel, that he who runs may read it: but that the good works of holy men are in themselves so perfect, in every respect so complete, as to endure the severity of God's judgment, and of themselves merit eternal life, is what we have great reason to deny.

A work cannot in itself be called good, if it be not entirely so, and nothing can perfectly please God, in which there is any the least mixture of sin: now human nature is so weak and degenerate, that, as far as it is concerned, there is no action but has some alloy in it. We see, in fact, that the best men in all ages have complained of the infirmity of their natures, and submitted their best actions to God's mercy. If we take a view of the heathen world, we shall find it over-run with wickedness as well as ignorance: they neither knew the true God nor how to please him: the motives on which they recommended virtue to others, and practised it themselves, were built upon self-interest or vain-glory: as they knew not the will of God, and were unacquainted with his laws,

laws, all their great object was either their own advantage or reputation. The fullness of time was not come for the publication of the Gospel, and therefore all divine assistances were withheld (either for the discovery or performance of the will of God) but what was vouchsafed by the mere and ordinary light of nature: but this, though the empty boast of the Greek, and the senseless tenet of the Freethinker, was insufficient to set forth the infinite goodness and mercy of God, in sending his Son; this was not able to declare his will to mankind; this was incapable of directing us in the way to salvation, or of furthering us therein by the assistance of his holy Spirit. It is then the great, sole prerogative of *Christians*, not only to know, but, by the aid of divine grace, be enabled to perform the perfect will of God, without which aid we are in no better state than the heathens themselves. We are not, however, to presume, that this bare name of Christianity will avail us; no, though we are in this regenerate state, yet our infirmities are many and great, "the imaginations of our heart are almost continually evil," so that if God should straitly mark iniquity, "who could
 " stand

“ stand before him? If he should enter into
 “ judgment with us, no flesh could be justi-
 “ fied in his sight:” and therefore our bles-
 sed Saviour has taught us to pray, that he
 would not only give us our daily bread, but
 would also forgive us our trespasses, for we
 daily sin, daily need a pardon, and if we
 think otherwise “ we deceive ourselves, and
 “ truth is not in us.” We can by no means
 expect to have our sins done away, but by
 the precious blood of Christ: we cannot do
 any thing that is pleasing to God, but by his
 spirit, who makes us both to will and do
 those things that are so: neither can our best
 actions be acceptable in his sight, without the
 intercession of our great Redeemer.

It is then *faith in his blood, the assistance of
 his grace, and his intercession with the Father,*
 that can render us fit objects of his favour,
 that can make us capable of receiving those
 glorious rewards which God has promised to
 all those who sincerely strive to obey him.
 No good works of ours can claim any *title* to
 eternal life; that is the gift of God, the free
 gift, not of debt but of grace. And though
 the scriptures speak of “ rewards for the
 “ righteous,” and that “ God will render to
 “ every

“ every man according to his deeds,” yet we must not conclude that these rewards are due to us by any antecedent merit of our own, founded upon an equality ; neither are we to think, that because eternal life is the gift of God, and all do not enjoy it, therefore he is a respecter of persons ; neither are we to imagine that the free will which he has given to mankind is nothing, and signifies no more than a name : far be it from us to think, that an infinitely holy and good God, the very righteous Judge, does any thing but what is just and true. As the free gift of eternal life is offered to all, so all have a free power to accept or refuse it : it may be justly called a *free gift*, because it is the consequence of the good use which is made of those assistances of grace, which are freely and of his own will given us to profit withal. As therefore free will is given to all mankind, by which we may make a good or bad use of this divine assistance (which accordingly will either be withdrawn or increased) so shall we be rewarded or punished. But remember that we are indebted to ourselves for the punishments which we suffer, but to God for those rewards which he confers upon our sincere, though

though sinful obedience, because he alone is the author and giver of all these good gifts and means which are requisite for the attainment of his promises. In another respect it may be called his free gift, because, though different degrees of rewards are given to different improvements, yet they all far exceed any improvements to which they are appropriated, and are above all that we can either desire or deserve.

If it be true then that an universal corruption is spread over the whole race of mankind (of which we have too great an evidence); that it has very much vitiated our faculties of judging and willing; and that we are very far from original righteousness, it will follow that unassisted nature can do nothing that's good, and that "works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasing to God." Since it is also true, that Christ has not so far freed us from this corruption as that we cannot sin under the Gospel-covenant, since he has only given us a federal right to such assistances as will enable us to repress it (for we find by woeful experience, that we often fall from grace, and often receive it in vain) and
since

since even our best performances, even in our most regenerate state, are so much tainted with sin, and our most holy things abound with iniquity, it follows, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment, but through the death and intercession of our Redeemer. Since the merit of our good works is founded upon their being completely good (which they cannot be while there are so many defects in them which need a pardon) it evidently follows that there can be none, because where there is guilt there is always a punishable deficiency. The word *merit* has a sound that is so daring, so little suitable to the humility of a creature towards a being of infinite Majesty, that we should never mention it but with the utmost diffidence, and in the most qualified sense. After we have acted in the best manner we are able, we should be so far from boasting of our righteousness and claiming a reward, that we must ever confess ourselves vile and miserable sinners, and humbly sue for mercy and forgiveness only in and through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

According to the terms of the text then, what must we think of that Antichristian Church

Church, which maintains the merits of good works, who not only believe that they can strictly perform their *whole* duty, but by doing more than all, sell the overplus to their tardy brethren? If in us, that is, "in our sinful flesh dwelleth no good thing," if "in many things we offend all," if our best performances are vile in themselves before God, how can we lift up our eyes to Heaven with any confidence of forgiveness? How can we be so arrogant as to expect a reward for ourselves? But, how dare we think so foolishly and meanly of eternal salvation, as to imagine we have *more* than will purchase it? Such thoughts as these, as unscriptural and repugnant to common sense, must startle every thinking man, every sober and sincere Christian. How can any true disciple of Christ join communion with her, who professes and teaches doctrines contrary to his? What a poor opinion must we have of her purity, and how much pity those poor souls who are *forced* to choose her for their guide, and at last, perhaps, are in love with her principles? When we reflect how closely they are embraced, how diligently taught, and how zealously defended, sometimes our
 hearts

hearts must swell with indignation, sometimes melt with compassion. However, Christian Charity makes us hope, that those who are ruled with the iron rod of compulsion, and those who are led on in ignorance, will be saved by the blessed effects and virtue of that all-powerful intercession which they so little regard ; that our gracious Redeemer will prevail with his Father to forgive them, " because they know not what " they do."

Leaving them therefore to his boundless mercy, let us consider ourselves as a very happy people, whom God in a particular manner has favoured by planting amongst us his true religion ; that our ingratitude may not prevent a continuance of such invaluable blessings, let us put away from us all hypocrisy and all guile ; let us praise him not only with our lips but in our lives ; as we are reformed in our opinions, so let us be in our practice ; and having this glorious light, let us walk as children of light. Let us not only renounce that dangerous and deceitful opinion of *merit in good works*, but let us humble ourselves before God, and trust in his mercies through Christ. Let us ascribe
nothing

nothing to ourselves that is good, but return the glory of all divine assistance to him who gave it. That he may vouchsafe to us the free gift of his spirit to enable us to do our duty, let us, by hearty and constant prayer, humbly beg of him, that he would increase our faith and animate our practice. To these divine helps let us join our greatest diligence “to watch against that sin which so easily besets us,” and to add our hearty and sincere endeavours “to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Since our works in themselves are far from being good, or to be depended upon, let us be taught, by a true sense of them, to reject every notion that may raise us high in our own opinion, or by which we may “think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.” Are we slothful servants? Let us seriously consider how we can possibly pass our accounts with our great and just Master; and let the sense of our past ill-management of those talents he has entrusted us with, awaken us into a double diligence for the future. Are we unprofitable servants? Though not as wicked as others, let us still employ our
time

time to the best advantage, and leave our unavoidable miscarriages to the all-sufficiency of the great atonement ; and though we cannot of ourselves have an entire confidence, yet we may entertain a modest hope, that he will forgive us our debts, and receive us into his joy.

SERMON

...to the best advantage, and leave out
...to the all-sufficiency
of the great atonement; and though we can-
not of ourselves have entire confidence,
yet we may entertain a moderate hope, that he
will forgive us our debts, and receive us into
his love.

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

ACTS, CHAP. V. PART OF VER. 29.

"We ought to obey God rather than men."

IT is surely for want of consideration, and not of principle, that the reverse at any time takes place: Though there be no truth more certain than that God alone is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, the only one to whom, amidst our difficulties, we are obliged and encouraged to look up for succour and relief, yet by an horrid infatuation we are all of us in our turn carried down the stream of fashionable errors, and led to allow what our hearts in their cool moments never fail to condemn. How much the apish imitation of our depraved superiors, or the slavish fear of singularity,

singularity, affect either our base servility, or betray our false shame, is daily too visible to need illustration. In defiance of that common sense (which we vainly pretend to, and to dispute which claim would be an insult of the blackest dye) we affect a relation to vice, if it be but "cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day," whilst we neglect poor virtue in rags, if it be only because she "lays at the gate full of sores, and desires to be fed by the crumbs which fall" from our prodigal tables.

But this militates against the Apostle's precept, "be not conformed to this world." One of the great enemies of our faith, which we promised at our baptism to renounce, is the *world*: it is an enemy that appears in so many flattering, so many alluring shapes, that we had need "put on the whole armour of God" to resist its open assaults, or baffle its secret machinations. It oftener takes us by surprize than by any other mode of attack, and therefore our utmost vigilance is necessary to discover its early movements, as well as the strongest resolution to withstand its fascinating delusions. "We wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against
"princi-

“ principalities, against powers, against the
 “ rulers of the darkness of this world, against
 “ spiritual wickedness in high places.” These
 gain a wonderful ascendant over our minds,
 inasmuch that, if we be not constantly trained
 up in all the exercises of religion, and inured
 to many hardships in our spiritual war-
 fare, we shall too tamely surrender, and be
 led away captive by them. It requires a
 wonderful fortitude, the fortitude of Sha-
 drach, Meshach, and Abednego, and which
 the true love of God only can inspire, not to
 be allured by the promises, or awed by the
 menaces of men in power. So difficult a
 task is it, that the Apostle, more particularly
 in this case than any other, strongly recom-
 mends the firmest posture of defence, and
 the use of such weapons as promise us the
 strongest security. Nothing tends more to
 administer comfort, inspire hope, and insure
 success, under the pressure of affliction, or
 force of temptation, than the forming such
 notions of God, and such only, as both na-
 tural and revealed light have discovered to
 us: to seek for any other is only putting our-
 selves in the dark: it is shutting our eyes
 against those evidences which the nature of

the subject naturally produces, and then complaining we cannot see. For the establishment and elucidation of all truth there must be a correspondency between the object and the faculty : now, so little competent are all our outstretched abilities to know God, so difficult, if not impossible, is it for finite beings to comprehend infinity, and so heterogeneous is the *perfection* of such knowledge, that we may as well attempt to see objects with the ear, or hear sounds with the eye. The sublimity of such speculations is so little adapted to the shallowness of mortal insight, that it is no wonder if in such attempts we should be foiled, perplexed, and miscarry. When men will quit that plain, strait path which is chalked out to them, and deviate into the pathless wild of groundless conjecture and ill-founded hypothesis, it is not surprizing if they be lost in the mist of error, and swallowed up in the quicksands of infidelity. “ Let your loins then be girt about with Gospel Truth,” and put on the breast plate of a willing and obedient spirit, ever ready to follow those directions, and to delight in those revelations, which God in his great mercy has vouchsafed

safed to make of himself. "The things of God must be spiritually discerned;" and though the natural man, by the strength of his boasted, his flattered reason, may dive deep into the recesses of worldly attainments, yet it is the "sword of the spirit" only, that lays open to our view those wonderful arcana of the divine nature and will, which the philosopher in vain strives to develope. But, as the most enlightened of us move in the midst of darkness, and the most confident must take heed lest he fall, therefore we must pray to God to illuminate our understandings, to regulate our affections, to sanctify our wills, and to lead us into all truth: we must pray with all prayer, public, private, vocal, and mental: in the spirit we must be "athirst for God, even for the living God, when we come to appear before his presence:" Not content ourselves with such excuses for the neglect of duty as are too familiar amongst us, but watch thereunto with all perseverance, not only when afflictions press down our souls, and hastily remit them to God, but in our most prosperous halcyon days, in every the calmest state, "by prayer and sup-

"plication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known to God."

Habited in this coat of mail, we may easily parry off the influence which this world is too apt to engrave upon our hearts: we shall be taught to consider, that its pleasures are transitory, and often leave a sting behind; that its honours are only a temporary blaze, which the breath of fame can at pleasure either kindle or extinguish; and that all its riches make themselves wings and flee away, or are reluctantly left by us as a portion to others. By virtue of such principles we shall clearly perceive the vast difference between religion and worldly interest, that the ways of the one are ways of pleasantness, and those of the other are beset with thorns in our eyes and scourges in our sides: we shall discover that there is no real competition betwixt the two, and that all worldly considerations are "deceitful upon the weights, and altogether lighter than vanity itself." Our errors in this respect generally arise from the want of making a proper estimate of God and man respectively. As he has created us and vested us with every faculty both of body and
mind,

mind, like the potter, he has full power over the clay, and justly demands the exercise of those faculties in his worship and service: Man, on the contrary, in the midst of his boasted importance, though "all things are put in subjection under his feet," cannot create one particle of matter, cannot annihilate it, can give it no form but what results from the properties first infused into it; he has the use and dominion, but the *creative* power, by which all things, and man among the rest, are held in a balance, still rests in God. As in a social state our mutual dependence arises from our different relative capacities, so, in a religious point of view, our obedience to God as naturally springs from right of creation, as effects from their proper causes. "In him we live and move, and have our being;" he not only gives us existence, but preserves that existence to us: he preserves us by his continual watchful providence over us, by the constant supply of his bounty, by securing us from many dangers and defending us in all, by extricating us out of difficulties, by relieving our wants, and by fortifying us under all our afflictions; and this he does by various unforeseen,

foreseen, unexpected events; by trifling occurrences, that seem by nature insufficient to the effect; in short, by a continual miracle he "gives us life, and breath, and all things;" but look at man; he comes into the world in the most helpless state, grows to maturity by slow and gradual advances, at best only totters through life, and, suddenly sometimes, drops into his grave to be no more seen: he cannot redeem himself one moment from that general fate; much less can he lengthen out another's existence beyond the will of Heaven. The will of man is often the perverse dictate of a rotten, corrupt heart, the offspring of a base, insidious purpose, begotten by pride, and nurtured by the hand of selfishness; but God's will flows from the pure principles of goodness and justice divinely blended, without fraud to direct, violence to enforce, or cruelty to complete it. The most extensive benevolence is displayed in all God's dealings with us; whilst man, with a griping suspicious hand, though he see his brother have need, still shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, if it be merely from the narrow, unworthy motive of giving pain, and continuing

ing his dependence: but our comfort in such cases is, that "greater is he that is in us" than he that is in the world." Our interest then should lead us to obey God rather than man; but let not such selfish notions have the whole weight with our choice; let gratitude take the lead, and remind us, that God not only employs his care about our bodies, but has more particularly provided for the happiness of our souls, after "this earthly tabernacle be put off." Christ has redeemed us from the captivity and thralldom of sin, has satisfied his Father's justice, and made a way for mercy. He has made that agreement which no man could make for himself, much less for his brother; the most daring mortal must let that alone for ever: here he feels himself deserted by all his knowledge, his greatness, his dignity, and all his high pretensions. Benignity only, that jewel which shines so brilliant in man's redemption, can truly distinguish man from man: but look into the world, and witness to the steely cruelty of many relentless monsters, who will turn a deaf ear to a suppliant's, to a friend's request, and deny that small boon, which

which God every day hundredfold confers upon them.

From this contrasted view of the infinity of God, and the finiteness of man, we may fairly ask, what ground is there for confidence in man, what arguments for our obedience to him in preference to God? But how absurd soever the question may appear, yet it is a dilemma we all incur, when we either refuse or neglect to pay due honour to God, his church, his ministers, or any thing more immediately dedicated to his service. Thus when we betray our religion, by complying with the modish irregularities of the times, by travelling on Sundays by choice, by visiting a friend instead of waiting upon God in his church; by paying that homage to man which it is difficult to discover in one feature towards God; by breaking through any religious principle rather than forego any secular advantage; in these, and many other cases equally shameful, we servilely truckle to the humours and expectations of the world, though we thereby expose ourselves to the divine wrath. But how vilely do we prostitute that understanding, which

which in common concerns we make such proud boast of, but which in the more important affairs of religion we seem to lose sight of? The fourth commandment is guarded by the previous word *Remember*, on purpose to caution us against that abuse of the Sabbath which is too notorious amongst us. Can our friend, whom we prefer to our God on Sunday, restore a withered limb, recover us from the jaws of death, or prevent the calamities of life? No; and yet how can we expect that God should do all or more than this, when the creature is worshipped instead of the Creator? Can our earthly friend, at the day of judgment, plead the merits of a crucified body, and so bear those sins and transgressions which he has conspired with us daringly to commit? Will he suffer himself to be "despised and rejected of men," to be "bruised for our iniquities," to lay down his life for our sakes? If not, let us blush for our preference, blush for that slight which we offer to God. Ingratitude is generally esteemed a guilt that startles nature; but it can never appear in blacker colours than when "we hide, as it were, our faces from" our Saviour, and pay him so little esteem.

esteem. If gratitude can appear most amiable, it must be in return for the greatest benefits; to ask what these are, would be such an insult to a Christian, that I spare his confusion. But let us ever remember, when "we commune in our own hearts, and in our chamber, and are still," to ask ourselves this important, this awakening question, lest for want of judging ourselves, we should at last, at the day of accounts, be dreadfully "judged of the Lord." And let this short sentence never depart from our hearts, that we ought to obey God rather than men.

SERMON

S E R M O N XI.

ROMANS, CHAP. VIII. VER. 16, 17.

*"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our
"Spirit, that we are the children of God:"*

*"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God,
"and joint heirs with Christ."*

THE many false teachers that are gone out amongst us, to draw disciples after them, magnify their office in a most extraordinary manner, as if they were the true Apostles of Christ, and the direct messengers of the Most High. Amongst other usual artifices of seducers, they work upon the hearts of foolish and unlearned persons, by stiling their followers the children and elect of God, ignorantly expounding, and presumptuously applying these words of my text, and others
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of the like nature, to such as swallow their indigested and incoherent effusions. Nothing seems more necessary than an explanation of the true sense of such passages, to check, if possible, the vain presumption of these men, and to secure others against their dangerous delusions.

To be a child of God carries with it a notion so engaging, that men more eagerly listen to such doctrines as give them any assurance of being so. Hence, well meaning, but ignorant persons, even doat upon such teachers, as if they were angels sent from Heaven to give them that assurance: On the other hand, the most vile and profligate sinners (that from sound doctrine can give themselves no reasonable hopes of God's favour) cannot but greedily suck in such flattering lies, and steadily adhere, as to their best refuge, to those that coin them. And it is enough to give both these kind of men an assurance that their doctrines are true, when they are once persuaded (as they endeavour to be, and delight in being so) that these men are sent by Christ to save them, to communicate the gifts of the Holy Ghost to them, and to shew them, as they suppose, a nearer

nearer way to Heaven. Hence they begin to imagine that they are converted and born again, and thence, with the highest presumption, are led on to believe at last, that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit; that they are then the children of God." To obviate the many vain and deceitful hopes of being the children of God, when we are rather perhaps the children of the Devil, and at the same time to offer the true knowledge and well-grounded comfort of so divine a doctrine, I shall attempt a particular and minute explication of the terms of my text; and first of all, what is meant by the *Children of God*.

Now God is styled in Scripture in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all." Here the title of Father is applied to him, in respect to his giving being to all things as his creatures, and the works of his hands: for though inanimate or irrational creatures can in no sense be called the children of God, yet God, considered as the author of all being, may properly enough be distinguished as the "Father of the universe." In a sense somewhat more restrained,

strained, and with regard to such beings to whom he has given life, and reason, and moral faculties, God is described "the Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," the whole family of rational creatures, such as angels and men: and these in like manner, on account of the living and rational nature he has given them, are frequently in Scripture honoured with the appellation of "the Sons of God." By sin men forfeit the benefit of this natural relation of God the Father, and become strangers, and "without God in the world," being rejected by him and no longer considered as his sons, but cast off as objects of his wrath and displeasure: by repentance and renewed obedience, they who are effectually convinced of the folly and unreasonableness of sin, return, as far as in them lies, to their Father's house, and desire to have access again to his favour and mercy: God, by accepting their repentance, and pardoning their past sins, according to the gracious terms and declarations of the Gospel, and giving them the assistance of his holy spirit to sanctify them for the future, receives them again as a gracious Father, and adopts them for his sons,

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in St. Paul's language gives them the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father) and they become again of the household of faith. This is what the Scripture elsewhere calls *Regeneration*, the *New Birth*, and sometimes the *New Creation*, describing such persons as being in a spiritual sense created anew unto good works, and born "not of blood, "nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will "of man, but of God, "being born again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and "abideth for ever:" According to St. Peter, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus "Christ having, according to his abundant "mercy, begotten us again unto a lively "hope." Now the plain meaning of all these figurative expressions is this: When a sinner sincerely returns to a sense of his duty, and effectually amends his life, God, who considereth whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust, pities him, even as a father pities his own children; and though indeed, in strictness of estimation, he be no more worthy to be called his son, yet upon this his true repentance he receives him again into the arms of his mercy, and says, "I

" will be his God, and he shall be my son." Answerable to this account of this relative character on God's part, it is manifest, that the title on ours of being " Children of God," is expressive of the highest obligations of duty and obedience, and of our stedfastly persevering in the practice of all virtue and righteousness. As the departing from that originally caused those, who by *creation* were naturally the sons of God, to become strangers and enemies to him ; so by returning to it again (and by no other method) can they, who through wicked works have been strangers and enemies to God, become again, through the divine mercy, the sons of God by *adoption*, and continue to preserve that character by their perseverance therein: " In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil."

Next I shall consider what we are to understand by being " Heirs of God." Now the word children being a title of affection and love, implies, when used in a figurative sense, an expectation of favour, and a dependence for support. " Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." If the

the relation of children be acknowledged, the very idea of that relation carries with it in course a promise, or an assurance of a blessing. Now because God is infinitely more able to provide for those that rely on him, than earthly parents are to make provision for their natural posterity, and because the portion of God's children can by no possible misfortune, by no accident, by no force, by no fraud, be taken from them, (unless by departing from the commands of their Heavenly Father they voluntarily cast themselves out of his favour) therefore the inheritance of those on whom the Father hath bestowed such manner of love that they should be called the sons of God, is in Scripture stiled "a kingdom which cannot be moved."—"The things which cannot be shaken"—"a city which hath foundations"—"a continuing city"—"an inheritance among them that are sanctified"—"the inheritance of the saints in light"—"an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away:" And God himself, in St. John's vision, speaking from the throne of his glory, thus declares, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and he shall be my son."

Now the title of son, or Child of God, being used as of the same import with one that is to *inherit all things*, that is, all those things which God has promised to them that love him, is exactly correspondent to the Apostle's manner of speaking in the text, if *children then heirs*; and because the promise of God, who cannot lye, stands always sure, (so that the reward of virtue, however at present distant and invisible, is yet in reality as certain in the determinations of the divine counsel as if it was already actually in our possession.) Hence St. Paul carrying the same figure still higher, in his description of the happiness of those sincerely religious persons whom in the text he styles *Heirs of God*, thus expresses himself: "God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." He further tells them, that they are "come (already come) unto Mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirit of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant; and to God the Judge of all."

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This is the full meaning of that second character given in the text to sincere Christians, that they are heirs to God, heirs of his promises, and inheritors of his heavenly kingdom.

It next follows, "*joint heirs with Christ.*" Though men, as well as all superior rational creatures, are originally by creation the children of God, and so long as they continue to obey the law of their nature, and commands of God, cannot fail to continue in his favour; and though sinners, when they sincerely repent and amend, have good and reasonable grounds, from the consideration of God's natural perfections, to hope for mercy and compassion at his hands: yet neither to sinners is God under any obligations of justice to restore them, upon their repentance, to the same state of favour as if they had never sinned; nor even upon the most innocent and perfectly sinless creatures (if any such there were) is he under any natural obligation to confer immortality, and an eternal kingdom of unspeakable glory: No; all that justice in that case requires is, to distinguish them according to their deserts, in that rank of the creation wherein their natural capacities placed them, and for such a

space of time as the original good pleasure of the Creator allotted them. The being that God freely gave he may at any time, without any injustice, take away: And no creature, even without the consideration of sin, has any more claim of right to continue for ever, or even for any limited time, to be exalted above the natural improvements of its original capacities, than it had any right to be created before it was, or to have been made in an higher species of creatures. Eternal life, therefore, is the gift of God; not due to mankind by nature; not a claim of right; (no, not even if they had continued innocent, much less to returning sinners) but it is the gift, the free gift of God, originally in the state of innocency; and to penitents it becomes much more so, only in and through Christ: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and has no title, no claim of right, naturally to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. But the Father has appointed unto his Son Jesus Christ a kingdom, and "I," says our Lord to his disciples, "appoint unto you a kingdom; that whosoever overcometh (prevails over the sinful temptations of the world) may sit down with me in my throne, even

" even as I also overcame, and am sat down
 " with my Father in his throne." By *Nature*
 we are only in general the creatures of the
 Almighty, and the works of his hands: By
sin we were become objects of his wrath and
 displeasure; by obeying the gracious terms
 of the Gospel of Christ we are not only re-
 stored to the favour of God, as of a merciful
 and tender father, but our nature is more-
 over exalted by him to some similitude with
 his: He was in a singular manner the *Son of*
God, and yet condescended to become our elder
 brother, by being made in the likeness of
 man: He voluntarily became the *Son of Man*,
 and " as many as received him, to them he
 " gave the power to become the Sons of
 " God." He has therefore received them as
 joint heirs with himself in his Father's king-
 dom: And God has caused them to be " con-
 " formed to the image of his Son, that he
 " might be the first born among many bre-
 " thren:" And " for this cause Christ is not
 " ashamed to call them brethren:" And St.
 Paul, in a most elegant and lively manner,
 carrying the same figure of speech still higher,
 says, " We are members of his body, of his
 " flesh, and of his bones." Those who never
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had the knowledge of the Gospel are God's children by creation, in such a sense as St. Luke says of Adam, that he was the son of God ; and with regard to these, " the Judge of all the Earth will do what is right," and " with equity will he judge the nations:" But as to his free gifts, he is still always at liberty to do what he will with his own, and in that kingdom which he has appointed to his Son Jesus Christ, he may appoint whom he himself thinks fit, to sit on his right hand and on his left. " He may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." The meaning of this is, not that God will act arbitrarily and without reason, (as some have understood these words) but that he, and he only, is the competent, proper, and unerring Judge, upon what persons, and upon what conditions, it is fit for him to bestow his favours ; and in and through Christ he may give power, on what terms and conditions he pleases, to such as shall attain to those conditions, to become in a peculiar manner " the Children of God, and if children then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

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What now remains, but to shew in what sense the spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit, (if we be good Christians) that these characters do truly, and not affectedly, belong to us. Nothing can be more absurd, nothing more contrary to the whole tenor of the Gospel, than the notions of the Puritans formerly, and of some Schismatics of these our days, who take their own enthusiastic imaginations to be the testimony of the Spirit of God within them. Such persons judge not of the tree by its fruits: They compare not the course of their lives with the rule, indeed the only rule of God's commandments: They judge not of their being spiritual persons, or having the Spirit of Christ, by the practice of those virtues which the Scriptures call "bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit;" but they have a strong, confident conceit, that they are the elect, the chosen people of God, and the mere strength of this groundless imagination they apprehend to be the Spirit of God, bearing witness with their spirit, that they are the Children of God, But this is so senseless a notion, and so manifestly destructive of all virtue, and the true difference between good and evil, that the
bare

bare mention of it is its sufficient confutation. For what can be so shameful a rebuke to sound reason as to believe a thing to be true, merely because they believed it to be so, without the least shadow of a proof, or any evidence of that disposition of mind and conduct of life which are the only distinguishing and inseparable marks of being truly the Children of God.

In the Apostles days, the miraculous gifts and graces of the Spirit, made evident by their real and visible effects, were undeniable testimonies of the Spirit of God being given to those persons in whom these extraordinary gifts appeared. Not that all who were endued with these miraculous gifts were good and sincere Christians; but to those who beheld them, they were evident attestations of the spirit to the truth of the Gospel, which they then preached to the world: And to the persons themselves, on whom these gifts were bestowed, if they were conscious in their own hearts of being sincere in their profession, and virtuous in their practice, then these effects were indeed the Spirit of God bearing witness with their spirit: But without such a convincing consciousness, miracles themselves could

could not of themselves give them any such confidence; for St. Paul tells us, that if we "have all knowledge, all faith, all gifts," all miraculous assistances of the Spirit, nay, do many noble and great actions, and "have not charity," we are nothing; which plainly supposes, nay proves, that these miraculous gifts alone (were they possessed) cannot make us, or be any evidence of our being the Children of God.

Both in the Apostles days, and in all succeeding generations, even to the end of the world, the several declarations which the Spirit of God hath made by the Prophets in the Old, and Christ and his Apostles in the New Testament, compared with the verdict of our consciences concerning the agreeableness of our actions to those declarations, these are the testimony of the Spirit: The promises of God, made to men in Christ, and established on the terms of the Gospel, are represented in the New Testament as being sealed or confirmed to us by covenant in Baptism; and therefore speaking concerning baptized converts, "God," says St. Paul, "hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts:" And therefore those
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who fulfil this obligation, (the obligation entered into by Baptism) by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, in the suitable practice of a virtuous life, these have the seal or earnest of the Spirit. Thus, says St. Paul to Timothy, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The testimony of a good conscience is, in the language of the text, "the witness of our own spirit," and the agreement of this testimony with the revealed declarations of the will of God, carefully and duly compared together, is what the Apostle here stiles the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit. He that runs may read this doctrine: Let no man deceive you.

SERMON

S E R M O N XII.

EXODUS, CHAP. XX. VER. 8.

"Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy."

HOW necessary soever the caution of the word *remember* might be to the Jews, who were always a perverse and backsliding people; and too soon deviated from the path of the true worship of the true God; yet equally or more applicable is it to this generation who (to use the most charitable language) too frequently forget the duty they owe to their great God, and the reverence due to his sanctuary. It is an astonishing, it is a melancholy consideration, that the power of reasoning, which so eminently distinguishes some men's superlative genius in some of the most important, the most decisive

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five concerns of life, should not teach them to think and know that their whole dependence is upon God, and that if " he hide his face from us, we must be troubled." It is no difficult matter to inform ourselves, nay, we quickly perceive where our temporal interest lies, and we never fail to cultivate it: " we rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." We are naturally impressed with a sense of gratitude to man, for his favours conferred upon us: the common language is, " I would rise at midnight to serve such an one;" it is meet and right so to do: but what has God done to us, that he merits not the same zealous attendance? Wherein has he offended us, that instead of rising at midnight to worship him (as we ought by the same argument to do) we can scarce be prevailed upon at midday, on his own day, to pay him the tribute even of a little lip-service. But shall man, whose breath is only a vapour, be the object of our esteem, our regard, our affection, our gratitude, nay, the soul's every noble faculty, and shall God, who can destroy us in a moment, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, without whose sustaining hand we must drop into nothing, shall

shall he have no share in our hearts? Shall man, who at most can confer upon us only a few gilded, a few perishable baubles, such as either please the eye, gratify the sense, or tickle the darling passion, and may instantly fly from the possessor's greedy grasp, shall he engross all our attention, and shall God, who "gives us life and breath and all things," the most solid, the most substantial goods, shall he be cast behind our backs as a thing of nought? Shall we, with the deep bow and lying smile, solicit the favour of courts, which can only confer upon us a little honour, a little temporary blaze, a little preferment, and will we refuse to humble ourselves before the great God, who has the whole earth under his feet, and holds out Heaven itself to our view? Shall gratitude inspire us when we are largely benefited by man, and shall we be insensible to every gentle emotion, every nice feeling, when God has exhibited so much love towards us, as to "take the knife and slay his only Son?" Let us, even "as children of this world, be wiser in our generations."

The worship of God has always been the principal support of true religion. A proper sense

sense of the attributes of the Deity naturally leads to it, and is confirmed by it. It is impossible for a man justly to reflect upon the Majesty of God, without shrinking under the weight of the great thought: We cannot look up to the *power* of God, without being moved with the alternacy of a fear of danger and hope of protection: We cannot contemplate his *goodness*, without being melted into the most fervent current of praise and thanksgiving: We cannot view the promises of God, without discovering the warm, the chearful beams of happiness; neither can we ponder his threats, without being suddenly overwhelmed with the black cloud of despair. These thoughts combined, naturally lead us to prayer and devotion, and where can they be so seemly, so efficaciously offered up as in his temple, where he has promised more particularly to visit us? "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of you." How wonderfully does God, in his great Majesty, condescend to man, in thus chearing our souls with his especial presence, and in thus rewarding that duty which it is always our greatest interest to perform? And how happy ought we to think ourselves,

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in being allowed thus nearly to approach him? We feel ourselves much wrapt up in honour, when we are permitted to enjoy the company, much more the speech of great men: but, strange infatuation this! we breathe no sense of dignity when God vouchsafes the poorest person on earth the liberty of asking for whatever they want, and moreover has promised to hear the heart-felt prayer. One would imagine that we did not believe that God had promised this: Search the Scriptures, they will place it beyond a doubt. "Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." Here is a tender both of temporal and spiritual blessings. What greater encouragement can we possibly wish for? And how can we have the indolence to think that blessings will drop into our mouths unasked for, and when we neglect to adopt those means which God himself has commanded, and will never dispense with?

The breach of the Sabbath is become so notorious, and shews itself in so many different shapes of abuse, that, even in this relaxed age of religious discipline, the legislature of the land has thought it adviseable

to check its increase ; and our Sovereign, that great example of Christian virtues, has lately, by Proclamation, himself aided the great purpose. There has been, it cannot be dissembled, a very great and too just complaint against the higher class of this nation, for prostituting this day to the vilest purposes of gambling, debauchery, excursions of pleasure, and every kind and size of licentiousness. We may congratulate ourselves that reformation seems now to begin at its proper end, and we may piously wish to see it luxuriantly flourish in all the other aping subordinate spheres. Nothing, I am persuaded, can be more heinous, more provoking to God, because it carries with it a gross neglect, nay, one would think, a studied contempt of him. We feel ourselves offended, for instance, when an obliged, dependent person, shews us no marks of respect or gratitude. We naturally conclude that he either wants or deserves no further boon ; and we act upon those conclusions. But, unhappy we ! in the face of the strongest conviction with which the goodness of the best friend and benefactor can strike us, we pass by God on Sundays without any notice at all. We
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are too apt to make it, as well as a day of rest from our weekly labours, a day likewise of pastime, of sottishness, of sleep, of visiting, of disorderly games, of offence to good men, and scandal to ourselves. How dare we then look up to God, or expect to have any blessings from him, when he has commanded us to keep his Sabbath holy, which we profane in so many gross, so many infamous ways. Can we expect a blessing "upon our basket, our store, or any thing we put our hand unto?" Are we to be surprized that prosperity should desert us, that adversity should frown upon us; in short, that poverty should come upon us like an armed man, when these evils are the natural result of our conduct? Shall we fly in the face of God, and yet vainly suppose that "face will shine upon us and be gracious unto us?" Shall we expect that measure of mercy from God, which we, thus treated, would certainly deny to others? Let us examine our own feelings upon the subject, and if we have any ingenuousness of soul, any generosity of sentiment, we must flatter ourselves with few, very few hopes, unless we amend our lives and reform, unless we con-

stantly, or have a willing mind however, to assemble with our brethren in God's gracious presence, there return sincere thanks for mercies already received, and offer up devout prayers for those we in future want. It is moreover enjoined by the law, and in reason required of all masters of families, that they strictly command their servants and family to attend some place of public worship, at least once every Lord's day; that they do not suffer them, after the duty of the day, idly, impertinently, and riotously, to the dishonour of God, and the disgrace of religion, to throw aside the reins of decency and decorum, but to be subject to the will of their master, as on other common days, to read (if they can) or hear read, the word of God, as the Almighty will at the day of judgment require this at every master's hand. I am sensible that this doctrine militates against the received opinion of some, who have borrowed their sentiments from a climate which inspires the warmth of bigotry, where their coffers are concerned, but not of true religion. It is the practice in Popish countries, where the lower sort of people are insidiously kept in as much darkness of ignorance as barbarous

rous nations are by nature blinded with, to pass the Sabbath in sports, and games, and revels, as if men had no souls to provide for, only their bodies to relax and gratify. The ends for which we were sent into this world were not to gambol and frolick, and “like the Leviathan, to take our pastime therein;” but by a steady probation to assimilate our souls, minds, and affections, to that God who has given us reason and religion as the standards of human rectitude. Six days are given us for the purpose of our bodies and secular matters, the seventh is set apart to call off our attention from such objects, and to fix them upon God; reason must tell us that such practices as unhinge the mind, are repugnant to such serious employments: Religion, which never supposed men to be barefaced enough to encourage such excentricities, is silent indeed as to prohibitory precepts, yet gives different directions: and experience too plainly tells us, that the mind of man, in religious concerns, is already so much unstrung as to require a stricter rather than a further relaxation. But let me ask, is religion in that country whose manners we so fondly imitate, in its greatest purity? Has

it not been always sophistified by the delusions of the most artful and base traffick? Why then make it a model for those, who, I flatter myself, if they are not wanting to themselves, may enjoy it in all the artless simplicity of its native charms? Where every man, without restraint, may exercise his own judgment, and worship God in the way which seems best to him. First clear the previous question, and then we may implicitly follow their example.

God, amidst thousands of other blessings, has bestowed upon us that of times and seasons: He, "who inhabiteth eternity," dispenses some portion of duration to us: To some he vouchsafes a larger share, and of longer continuance than to others: He has commanded us to labour; or follow our respective callings, six days, but to hallow the seventh, that is, to set it apart to uses different from those of the others, to exercise ourselves in such duties as imitate his holiness. If then we disobey that command, by assuming that day also to ourselves, and allowing God no part of his own time, we may justly dread lest he should cut off the thread of our existence, and close our eyes before the Monday's
Sun.

Sun. It would be useful for us all to reflect when we abuse the Sabbath, that it is in God's power, as a punishment, to abridge that time, which we refuse to employ after his will, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," is a sentence that must chill even the warm blood of youth, teach rambling impulse how to think, and make the Sabbath-breaker tremble for fear of such a judgment. Frequent instances have occurred in other sins, in that, of *swearing* more particularly we have had recent ones, wherein the offender has been punished with instant death, in the very act and commission of the sin. Now God's authority extends equally to all his laws, and is equally violated by every transgression. He has the same right and power of punishing in one case as well as another, why then should the Sabbath-breaker escape more than the swearer or the murderer? No reason can be given but such as man's own deceitful heart, or the Devil's more deceiving suggestions may surmise. As this sin certainly includes a most shameful neglect and sovereign contempt of God, and as surely brings with it a train of most other irreligious acts, though the sinner may not be immediately

ately overtaken by God's pursuing hand, yet there is every reason to fear a secret curse attending our steps, which, like a canker-worm, will nibble away all our substance, and leave us unpitied objects of shame, wretchedness, and want: For as "he can open his hand, and fill all things living with plenteousness," so can he "shut up his loving kindness in displeasure." Then whither can we fly, to what sustaining hand recur, for the least drop of comfort, the smallest morsel of relief?

But admitting that the sinner disregards either these admonitions, or God's judgments, and still pursues the broad beaten road of irreverence and impiety, yet it will be proper for him to reflect, or else experience will too late convince him, that the grave puts a period to his heedless career, and that after death comes judgment. How can we bear the thought then of appearing before the tremendous majesty of that God, whom we have so little accustomed ourselves to contemplate, whom we have all our life long offended; from whose fury we have no hiding place, no retreat; and from whom we can reasonably expect no mercy, no gleam of favour?

favour? Happy would it be for us, did we by anticipation, by frequent reflection, prevent the greatest of all evils, the destruction of our souls; that we would seek him whilst he may be found; that we would shew forth his praise, not only with our lips but in our lives; that so, being true Christians here, we may be made happy hereafter.

SERMON

1851

THE STATE OF NEW YORK
IN SENATE
JANUARY 15, 1851.
REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE
IN ANSWER TO A RESOLUTION
PASSED BY THE SENATE
MAY 1, 1850.

ALBANY:

W. H. MERRILL

S E R M O N XIII.

ST. JOHN, CHAP. VI. PART OF VER. 27.

*“ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but
 “ for that meat which endureth unto ever-
 “ lasting life, which the Son of Man shall
 “ give unto you.”*

TO survey the face of the world, we should be led to imagine that this life was the only one; that the souls of men were no more than the souls of brutes; and the skin-deep happiness of this paltry world was all that God had to bestow upon us. Mix with the anxious bustlings of a populous commercial city, and mark the care that is stamp'd upon the bended brow; view the man, absorbed in thought, half bent with attention, fixed in pensive site; see how each man elbows through the crowd of busy pursuit,

suit, and a reflecting man must wonder what here could sweeten all their bitters, alleviate all their heavy labours, and smooth their difficulties. Descend into the country (a less complicated search !) and ask the inhabitants thereof, what their toils amount to ? What pearl they find amidst the rubbish of the weary scene ? What inestimable is it to which they thus rivet their affections ? What precious thing is it which they set in the scale against their God ? They will be ashamed to confess ; we must make answer to ourselves, It is *Money*, that golden God, that silver idol, which each man sets up in his heart, and deifies with the warmest devotions. That fordid dross, whilst it blesses one man, proves the curse of thousands ; first dazzles their eyes, then infatuates their understandings : Like all other sublunary beings, unpossessed, a treasure ; in hand a mere bauble : “ It is
 “ but lost labour then, that we haste to rise
 “ up early, so late take rest, and eat the
 “ bread of carefulness.” But the glory of being called a *rich* man is a very enchanting, ravishing sound : Is all our happiness then, all our immortal natures are capable of, mere air and empty sound ? But he died worth so
 many

many thousands. Where is the pleasure of the dead? He hears it not. Where is his honour? He leaves his riches to others. Where is his profit? It cannot redeem his soul, nor raise his body from the grave. He lies undistinguished, insensible to the glorious buzz. Every thing on this earth necessarily tends to dissolution. Nature is in a continual flux; not one thing remains in the same identical state, even for the small space of two hours together: How vain then to expect any certainty, any duration of bliss! And yet the blind worldling seeks it; though daily cheated, he daily pursues; sets no bounds to his ambition, puts no curb upon his avarice. But the malady stops not here: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness." The disorder is very malignant, the infection spreads itself, and produces vile effects amongst the very lower class of people: No wonder that their inattention to the great duties of religion is so very glaring, when those who presume to lead shew such cold indifference. But to argue from the sins of others to our own transgressions, is so far from alleviation, that

it

it highly aggravates our offences. For "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" each for himself answer to his own peculiar charge: The influence of example cannot then plead for us, but the most unlettered sinner must stand the shock of his own respective sentence.

As for the poor, who, like the sports of chance, are thrown into Nature's lap, destitute of those emoluments and comforts which distinguish the opulent class, whom friendship too often disowns, and whose faces the self-cursing world are too apt to grind; who are in an especial degree the begging pensioners of Nature, and are often cherished by the fostering hand of the few benevolent, it is highly incumbent upon them, thus severely circumstanced, thus struck by poverty, to make God their friend. Amidst the obduracy of so many stony hearts, it behoves them to engage his Providence in their favour; to beseech his wisdom to direct them, his goodness to cater for them, his power to protect them, and his all-saving mercy to compassionate their failings.

God, who sendeth rain both upon "the just and unjust," and deals out his largesse
to

to mankind with the liberal hand of compassion, evidences his care of them, when pierced by winter's severest blasts, by expanding the purses as well as the hearts of the rich, his stewards on earth. How far their conduct may merit such indulgence from man, is not for us harshly to determine; but humbly to remember that God has declared, that "the poor shall never cease out of the land:" But that their behaviour towards God is not correspondent to such unmerited favours; that their hearts are not warmed with thankfulness, nor their mouths filled with praise, is what, without a flagrant breach of charity, we may venture to affirm. But do they imagine that God sent them into the world only to eat, drink, and sleep; to riot in the corruption of their hearts, and to follow the wild vagaries of their own imaginations? How ungrateful is it, when our Saviour has promised that "whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, he will give it us," that we will not feel the force of such loving kindness; that we will not tread his courts with the sacrifices of a contrite heart and broken spirit? We have (we ought to know) not only a body to feed, but also a soul to nourish

nourish with its proper food: It is not sufficient to provide bread for our hunger, but to satisfy the empty soul with goodness: It is not enough to labour for the meat which perisheth, but we must strive to secure that meat which will endure with our souls unto everlasting life. The body, after a few years at longest, perhaps a few hours, must die; meats for the body, and the body for meats, equally sink to decay: But the soul, which cannot die, must pine, still pine, after that bread of life which Christ only can give us. We must not think that hereafter we shall be as miraculously preserved from destruction as the Israelites in the wilderness were from famine, by showers of manna: We must not suppose that we shall find this bread of life on the day of our death, without providing it, as some of the rebellious and stiff-necked Israelites sought manna on the Sabbath-day. No; we must now seek it; now make provision for ourselves. Christ has suffered for us; he has purchased this bread at the price of his own blood, and he will give it unto us; blessed be his name, thus to befriend us! Never to hunger, never to thirst, never to die, are blessings attending our faith
and

and obedience: What can we desire more? Nothing but what, I fear, we are not duly possessed of, an heart sensible of his sufferings and our own demerits, warmed with gratitude, and teeming with praise, melting into floods of sorrow, bleeding with guilt, and convulsed with the agonies of contrition. Do we at any time feel ourselves thus possessed? Harrowed by conscience, fired by faith, animated by hope, enraptured by sentiment, and ravished by the sweet thrilling impulse of the spirit? If we have not had this happy experience, if we be still strangers to these spiritual joys, I am sorry to remark, that we are very "far from the kingdom of God." Without this bread of life, which our Saviour declares himself to be to the Jews, the soul must ever hunger; without that living water which he spake of to the woman of Samaria, we must ever thirst; and without such Christian feelings as these it is impossible for us to live for ever. The man who rolls in his chariot, and seems to enjoy the very sweets of life, is dead, compared with the good-living Christian: He who is "cloathed in purple and fine linen," compared with him, is only a fool in trappings; he, who

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"fares sumptuously every day," gorges the fullsome repasts of luxury, and swims in an ocean of the richest juices, never knows his hunger appeased, or his thirst quenched, is more miserable than the humble, thread-bare cottager, who lives at the fountain of Christ. We should all, every one of us, consider, that here "we have no abiding city;" we should so conduct ourselves, that when "our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved," we may not be found naked, but that our mortality may be swallowed up of life. We know, as St. Paul says, that "while we are at home in the body," while we are so satisfied and contented with its abode, and the pleasures it affords us, "we are absent from the Lord;" we have no share in him, the image of the Godhead dwells not in us; we feel no earnest of the spirit, not knowing ourselves to be burthened, (as in that state we really are) we groan not.

Most miserable of all men is he whose conscience is so far lulled asleep by the soft pleasures of sense as not to be awakened by the voice of the Holy Spirit importuning his attention; who feels no thirst for God; who has all his life-time, perhaps, been quenching those

those sparks of religion which the soul, aspiring to God, naturally kindles, and who then only begins to fear, when he begins to feel, the terrors of the Lord. When affliction, sickness, or approach of death, rouse him out of his lethargy, he then, and then only, cries unto the Lord; and why? Because he can no longer depend upon himself. All those vain resources, his friends in iniquity, his jollities, this world, with all its delusive dependences, which before supported his short-sighted hopes, blinded his eyes, and caused him to forget his God, now prove insufficient to one moment's peace; now "mock him when his fear cometh: When his fear cometh as a desolation, and his destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon him, then shall he call," knock, intreat, implore; but God will not answer till his importunity speak the accents of true contrition, till the heart, out of which are the issues both of life and death, be touched and warmed by the love of God, and a feeling sense of his forbearance and long suffering. How must that soul then delight itself in fatness, which has hitherto been depastured in "a barren and dry land, where no water is;"

but is now solaced by the returning voice of that great Shepherd, who " carries his lambs " in his arms, and gently leads those that are " with young." How comfortable, how refreshing, to feel the impulse of the Holy Spirit animating, assisting, strengthening, and improving our most faithful, though late endeavours; sweeping and garnishing that soul, where wicked spirits only have been accustomed to dwell, and so making it an habitation fit for itself.

Before it be too late then, before the eyes of our bodies be finally closed, let us strive to open the eye of 'our souls, throw in some light into all that region of darkness, and conduct ourselves out of the mire, that we finally sink not. Let us be industrious for the body, but more diligent for the soul; sweep away the rubbish that causes us to stink through our folly; garnish the habitation of the inward man, that the Holy Spirit may enter in and dwell there, and so make our last estate, as it needs, better than the first. I have only briefly to remark, " whether ye eat or " drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the " glory of God," and then the blessings of the same God will rest upon you.

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S E R M O N XIV.

ISAIAH, CHAP. XXV. VER. 9.

*“ Lo ! this is our God ; we have waited for
 “ him, and he will save us : This is the
 “ Lord, we have waited for him, we will be
 “ glad and rejoice in his Salvation.”*

THE Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ is a doctrine full of astonishment, but indeed of comfort. Our first parents had transgressed the divine command ; the entailed sentence had rendered all the World guilty before God : No man, as a delinquent, could offer any satisfaction to his violated authority : No man could escape his justice, or hope for his mercy : Innocence alone could atone for guilt, but where was it to be found ? Not in the earth beneath, only in the Heaven

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above.

above. In pity to man, whose fall he foreknew, but could not, without destroying his free-will, prevent, God had pre-ordained a remedy in his own Son, the Son of his bosom, the Son of his love, and thereby exhibited that compassion which we can never too much admire, and ought never to cease to imitate, thereby displayed that mercy to the rebel, that grace to the redeemed, which otherwise would never have shone so brilliantly as gems in the crown of his glory. Our Redemption then took place immediately upon the fall; the blood of the Lamb, though not then spilt upon the cross, virtually washed away the original transgression: He was slain before the foundation of the world; and even the disconsolate pair, by the promise made to Eve in the serpent's sentence, received healing from his wings. Whether the custom of offering sacrifices was a divine institution, or a natural act of homage in man, dictated by his gratitude, we cannot, perhaps, precisely determine: However, it is very clear that they carried with them the idea of atonement; they prove the faint efforts of man to reconcile himself to an offended God; and (as revelation has since informed us) they are typical

typical of that propitiation, which personally appeared about this time, to bring to light what had hitherto been covered by the obscure veil of types and figurative representations. Through the whole series of patriarchal generations, to each of these was renewed the promise of a Messiah: Some particular manifestation of this mystery of Godliness was vouchsafed to many pious worthies: The restoration of our immortality, lost in Adam, beamed some rays of hope in the separate translations of Enoch and Elijah, one before, the other under the law. Most of the holy men of old, by the illumination of the Spirit, were allowed to believe it, and hoped in that belief. They all, "died in that faith, not having received the promises, but having seen afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them."

The Gentile world, all this time, lay in the darkest of ignorance, and the grossest of superstition. The most learned amongst them, their philosophers, were lost in fruitless researches, and chimerical conjectures: Their most exalted systems of virtue only convinced them that they had none: Their pursuit after happiness was bewildered by the
uncer-

uncertainty of the road: Their most shining rules of morality, like *ignes fatui*, only misled them: Their highest reasonings were jejune and dissatisfactory: "Their eyes were holden," that they could not see the truth: In short, their purblind reason, their sole guide indeed, though much ador'd, in its utmost stretch only shewed them the folly of trusting to its insufficient efforts. That in the composition of human nature there were two very contradictory principles, they very plainly discovered, that the soul naturally soared towards Heaven, while the body tended pronely to the earth, they too well understood: That the wisdom of God, they thought, would not originally form man such a paradox, appears from their Manichean hypothesis: And that his goodness should at first subject his darling creature, unrelieved, to such continued struggles, was inconsistent with the uniform flow and extent of his bounty to all, in every place. They were convinced then that mankind had deviated from the rectitude originally impressed upon them, and were crooked in their paths: Their several forms of worship, the different shapes of their religion, were, they knew, so many adumbrations

brations of a reconciling power; but alas! they knew not how to atone, they knew not what mode of expiation God would accept of, or be delighted with.

The Jews, one would imagine, should have had better notions, they “to whom the “promises were made:” They had been all along the peculiar people of God, had been conducted by his fatherly hand, been enlightened by successive revelations of his will, and were so strong in the expectations of a Messiah that they knew, they pretended to know (happy for them had they known it!) what tribe, what family, what city, and what place the Saviour should spring from: So confident were they, that they always preserved their genealogies in the strictest order, and with the most eager attention; but yet, unhappy people! unhappy in their bigotry! they paid more deference to the oral traditions of their Sanhedrim, than to the express words of Scripture; and contented themselves more with the ceremonial and political parts of their religion, than with the moral and weightier matters of the law: They wished for a Messiah, but, like their rebellious forefathers, chose to have one of
their

their own making: They eagerly courted the deliverance, but unhappily objected to the mode of its appearance.

Profane history informs us, that at the period when our Saviour was born, there was an universal expectation of some great prince or deliverer, who was to appear in the world. The different dispersions and captivity of the Jews, no doubt, contributed somewhat to this piece of knowledge: The Egyptians (who were always held remarkable for their learning, and among whom the Israelites were in bondage four hundred years) certainly at that time acquired some scattered notions of the predictions of a Messiah: The Grecians, who frequently travelled down to Egypt, in quest of new discovered knowledge, and with a view to enrich their own stock, probably, amidst other matters, gathered some fragments of this tradition. The Romans, the great but envious admirers of Grecian learning, were not, we may suppose, ignorant of this point: Having extended their conquests over most parts of the then known globe, and at the same time jealous of a rival in their power, they most likely communicated this history to their subjects, that so they might
the

the more properly guard against any invasions of their common rights. Thus we see, that a mighty and the chiefest power was prepared to receive him, but ready to oppose him; they gazed at the majesty of the ruler, but would not see the humility of the Lamb.

But, oh mistaken and deluded people! he is not come to "rule us with a rod of iron," but to draw us from destruction, as it were, with the cords of a man: "He has trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath" alone, and he will save us: He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by the voluntary offering of himself: He has purchased for us that favour of God which we had lost, and without him could never have regained: He has removed the darkness of error, and clouds of superstition from before our eyes: "He has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel:" He has shewn us a way in which we may safely walk, and, without our own fault, continually guides our feet into the paths of peace. He is "gone before, to prepare a place for us," that when this tabernacle of our flesh shall be dissolved, when the good things of this life shall have lost their charms, and its evils have dropped their
 sling,

sting, when the rich and the poor shall undistinguished stand together, then "where he is, there we," all those indeed that sincerely love him, and with heart-felt, instead of lip repentance, return to him, "may be also."

Are not these, my friends, blessings too noble to be conceived, and too big to be uttered? How warmly ought our minds to be impressed with a due sense of this divine love, to celebrate his praise with a decent ardour, and to shew forth every demonstration of joy which a Christian heart may be allowed to feel. Sorry am I to reflect upon the indifference and inattention which, in these modern days, are paid to this festival of Christmas: It is now scarce distinguished from the common dull current of time. A sense of religion (if we had any) should inspire us with the honour of that day when it received its birth, and we our salvation. Joy is inseparable from a sense of happiness; and did we but set a just value upon the benefits that flow from hence, the present joyless season would put on the smiling features of cheerfulness, and, if on any occasion, justify the maddening draughts of delight. In all
civil

civil and national affairs, every great occurrence, every remarkable transaction, that derives benefit to the state, is immediately recorded in the calendar of festivity, and by public authority enjoined observance. In our private temporal matters also, if we have at any time received a sudden, unexpected increase to our fortune, that æra is stamped with the brightest character: Our birth-day, or any other that proves very interesting to us, is commemorated in its successive returns by such species of satisfaction as our inclinations lead us to: And shall these be our invariable sentiments respecting the fleeting vanities of this short-lived existence, shall these impressions and influence our conduct in matters comparatively trifling, and yet shall not the condescension, the love, the humility, the sufferings, the death, and benefits of a Saviour, convey to us no ideas of transport, no grateful sensations? Far be it from us once to call ourselves Christians, when we refuse to regard the day, from which we date that honourable appellation. Only reflect what it is which this important period places before us: nothing less than salvation itself, which all the world had before waited for and “seen through a glass
“darkly,”

"darkly," and which it is our happiness certainly and infallibly to know, and in all it's blessed consequences to feel.

Should any of us be acquainted that on such a certain distant day, by repairing to a particular place, we should there receive a treasure vast as our necessities, and larger than our hopes, should we not calculate on that day, should we not, I ask, greet that rising sun, and bid all nature rejoice with us? Surely, yes. Is salvation then, the gracious gift of Heaven, the boon of the Almighty, deemed so trifling and insignificant, as to merit no attention, to excite no joy? Is the Son of God himself, who tenders the salvation, and quitted his glory to confer it, so mean and inconsiderable as neither to allure us by love, nor awe us by reverence? Again: Should a Prince or a Nobleman, high in dignity, and rolling in affluence, condescend to visit our humble cottage, make a friendly stay with us, and at his departure bestow an ample largess upon us, would not our tongue dwell upon his praise, would not the return of that time fill us with joyous gratitude, and should we not, in our common potations, toast him as our greatest friend? Shall we then be
thus

thus mindful of a mere man, and shew no praise, no thanks, no exultation to the Prince of Righteousness, who came down to visit us in great humility, thought it no scorn to dwell amongst us, and at last left us a legacy which none but himself could bestow, forgiveness of sins to raise our drooping spirits, his grace to assist our endeavours, and his glory to crown them. Ingratitude is a guilt that startles nature: In our daily intercourse with each other, if we have any sensibility, we detest it. For God's sake then never let us breathe so vile a principle in religious concerns, where the heart should dilate wide to the reception of every virtue, both of nature and grace. "Sing ye merrily therefore unto God our strength; make a chearful noise unto the God of Jacob: Take the psalm, bring hither the tabret, the merry harp, with the lute." Let every tongue speak of his praise, and let every instrument accord in melody to the great God of Heaven and Earth. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

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this kind of a pure man, and how no
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"This is the day which the Lord hath made
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S E R M O N XV.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. X. PART OF VER. 25.

*“ Master, what shall I do to inherit Eternal
“ Life?”*

THE person who made this enquiry was a student and interpreter of the Jewish law, and as a Jew our Saviour answered him: He does not give a particular account of the conditions and terms of acceptance which were afterwards to be revealed to the world, but refers him to his own knowledge and tells him, that an exact obedience to, and observance of, those two comprehensive duties, of loving God and our neighbour, would entitle him as a Jew, and whilst he remained a Jew, to eternal life. Under the Christian dispensation the question is much altered; and respects those qualifications which are essentially

tially necessary for a person who was converted from Judaism and Gentilism, and admitted into a covenant of grace, and not of works. The belief of a Messiah was all that was required of such, as an efficacious justification upon their first conversion: And the Apostles, writing principally to persons of such description, and founding their doctrine upon the faith necessary for conversion only, have led some weak and unstable minds to conclude, that a strong confidence in Jesus Christ and his merits, would render wicked Christians spotless before the throne of God. The want of attention to this distinction has proved the origin of that senseless, unintelligible jargon so strenuously maintained by modern fanatics. We, who have from our infancy enlisted ourselves under Christ's banner, must not rest satisfied with the requisites of adult conversion: Faith in Christ was the touchstone of conversion, and the *first* justification; but that involved still stronger, and more numerous obligations, which grounded our *final* justification. To be reconciled to God we must not only be possessed of conviction in the understanding, but renovation in the heart: We must not only be sorry for our sins, but demonstrate

demonstrate that sorrow by the practice of those Christian virtues which are opposite to the sins we repent of. When it is enquired in the New Testament, "what shall we do to be saved," and when it is asserted that to "believe and be baptized," or that Faith will save them or the like, it is only meant that they, who do not believe already, shall be acquitted from their past sins, or saved from the guilt of them, by *believing*, and coming into the terms required by the Gospel: or, that the first step to their salvation, and which will put them into a safe way, is Faith, or taking Christ for their master, and entering into his religion: Or else, Faith is taken for the whole Gospel method, and is then opposed to the law of Moses, or the institutions of the heathen world, in which they had before been bred up: But these expressions do not touch the case of us, who have been educated in this belief, or long professed it, and who must therefore look farther than bare Faith for our justification.

Now it is evident to our own observation and experience, as well as deducible from the exhortations in the New Testament, that the very best of men, by some sudden passion, or

some hidden weakness, have been betrayed into many wilful sins after their baptism, after the knowledge of the truth. But the great privilege of the Gospel, its singular glory is it to hold out a method of reconciliation, which at once alleviates the fears of the returning transgressor, and inspires him with the warm hopes of a recovery. Now, though these hopes are built only upon the Cross of Christ, yet they are mere shadows without fulfilling the stipulations. All that Christ has done and suffered for our sakes, was only in order to the settling of the conditions, but what we are to do, according to this treaty and compact, of which he is the mediator, is only to be found in the last revelation of God's will to mankind. Let not prejudice then, nor passion, nor the love of this world, nor fondness of carnal pleasures, nor affectation of singularity, lay a wrong bias upon our judgments, and so decoy us into the paths of darkness and error. The great lines of the Gospel, and those parts of it which declare the terms of salvation, have no obscurity in them, but lie level to the most inferior size of apprehension; so that nothing but an extreme corruption of the will, a perverse or
falsely

falsely-politic desire of misunderstanding them,
 can account for those false interpretations
 which have been fixed upon the plainest
 truths. The Scripture is very exprefs in the
 declaration of those terms and conditions
 which God requires of us. They are such
 as he has pleased to make them, and of so
 inflexible a nature are they, that it is not in
 our power to bend or alter them into what
 shape we please, and why? Because it did not
 belong to us to contrive or frame them. He
 alone knows what is in all respects most con-
 sentaneous to the eternal laws of reason and
 religion: He has an undoubted right to give
 us new laws, and lay upon us new conditions,
 but we have no right to give laws to him, or
 fix the terms proper for him to accept. If
 then God has proposed terms to us through
 his Son and his Apostles, here we must rest,
 and not attempt to bend them to our own
 schemes and inclinations. He has thereby
 shewn us which is the way to his salvation;
 he has marked out the path, and we must
 walk therein. The generality of Christians,
 though they possess the desire of eternal hap-
 piness, yet seem to think it much more fit that
 the Almighty should condescend to their terms,

than that themselves should submit to his. The young man in the Gospel was "not far from the kingdom of God," because he displayed some disposition after happiness, but, the conditions interfering with secular motives, he went away sorrowful, grieved to hear that the terms of salvation were so uneasy and expensive. Thus it is with modern Christians: They desire the happiness of the kingdom of Christ, but it's terms do not suit their present inclinations and designs: Thence they are led either totally to forsake their profession, or else by some vile cavil or pretext, to question it's principles. It is no other than the most egregious folly, after God hath so solemnly declared, so sufficiently promulgated, and so clearly made known to us the rules, which he assures us he will himself be governed by, in the distribution of his love and favour, to flatter ourselves that he will depart from those rules for our sakes, who would not depart from our unreasonable practices either for his sake or our own; and that he will adapt his proceedings at the last day to our practice in pity to us, when we would not accommodate our practice to his laws: This can never happen. We must not deceive ourselves, and
vainly

vainly hope that we shall thus escape at the last. God is not, will not be mocked: As the law passed, so it still stands and will stand; the same law which hands out mercy to the penitent, pours down vengeance upon the wilful and unrepenting transgressor's head.

It is of great consequence to the discovery and influence of truth, to keep our minds as free as possible from all pre-conceived notions of our own, all the impressions of education, all the inclinations of sense, all the influence of temporal interest, and to be perfectly willing to find that true which is so. Set a man about this enquiry who is immersed in this world, embarrassed with a sordid love of gain or honour, or captivated by lust or sensual pleasure, how hardly will he (if at all) receive any thing as the will of God inconsistent with his present views? What a bias will his own wishes and perverted will impress upon his understanding? And how many ways will he find to reconcile the plainest contrary declarations of God's will to his own state and vain hopes? Thus we go not in the dark, but light and direct ourselves in the paths of misery.

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It is adviseable then that we comprehend in one view all the declarations of the New Testament, not to select some, and omit others, as our sins, or darling sin, may suggest; but the obscure and terrifying must be so interpreted as to be agreeable to the most plain and pleasant. Neither our Saviour nor his Apostles have, in any one single portion of Scripture, laid down the several branches of the New Covenant, but only spoken of them as distinct occasions gave them handle. Now all things, equally declared by them to be the conditions of our pardon, are to be received by us of equal validity. If one passage attribute happiness to one virtue, or one act of the mind or soul, and another to another, the whole complex will is to be considered as the standard of our obedience. Because all have the same stamp of divine authority upon them, and without all, we cannot pretend to know the whole that Almighty God has declared concerning us. Indeed, if there be some obscurity, or some passages not so clear as others, the only danger lies in understanding them wrong, and that merely from a desire of reconciling our own

own practices to the hopes of happiness: It is no crime in any Christian not to understand a dubious text, provided he has nothing wilful in the want of understanding; but to resolve to understand in such a sense as may best consist with our false hopes of salvation, contrary to the acknowledgment of truth, and repugnant to those plainer texts, about the meaning of which there can be no doubt, this is to ensnare ourselves in our own traps, and by strong delusions of our own framing, to believe a lye. The following rules then may not be unacceptable: Consider the whole of what, in several places of the New Testament, is made necessary to God's favour and our eternal happiness: If we meet with any thing which we do not perfectly understand, attend but to the *plain* and *repeated* declarations; never presume to neglect them for the sake of others which are not so, or to interpret those which are not so very plain, in such a manner as to contradict those that are. The terms absolutely required are plainly and frequently expressed, and what is so, is, in every sort of writing, allowed to explain what is not so; but that what is not so plain may be so interpreted as to contradict

dict what is evidently so, by no means follows. It will therefore be unjustifiable and inexcusable in any one to adopt any part or text in the New Testament which is in any respect obscure, and oppose this to the plainest and most repeated, in order to strain a doctrine upon it totally heterodox, and which has nothing to recommend it but its novelty or its indolence: This is not to consult the honour of Almighty God, nor is it the way to find out the terms of our own happiness and salvation.

Were these the concerns of this life only, that fleeth away like a shadow, and is not to be stopped by all the art or power of man, to be solicitous about them, to be anxious about the event, would avail us but little. Let passion, pride, or covetousness, direct us; let ambition or lust blind our eyes; an end certainly would quickly come, when this world, with all its fantastic enjoyments, would be dissolved and vanish: Or were the enquiry after the pleasures, riches, or honours, of this world; had any person of very great sagacity, or uncommon penetration, appeared to direct them in the sure way to these riches, honours, or pleasures, though only of a temporary

porary effect, how few and small mistakes should we find even among the weakest of men? The covetous would easily understand, and make themselves perfect masters of the way to wealth; the voluptuous would never miss the path of pleasure; nor the ambitious the road to preferment, titles, and honour. None of them would trust any direction at second hand, when they could consult the oracle itself: None of them would be diverted from their enquiry by any impulse, force, or persuasion, contrary to that by which they professed to be directed: None of them would hazard the disappointment of their main end by relying on any thing but what was plainly proposed by their guide: And all of them would be proof against every attempt that could be used, either to deceive their understandings, or influence their wills, to the contrary of their different pursuits.

But let it not always be said, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser" in their pursuits after mere trifles, misery and ruin; less capable of being imposed upon; more guarded and secure in their way "than the Children of Light," who profess to have greater and more noble things in

in view, a state of unchangeable happiness, eternal in the Heavens, when this poor, uncertain, fordid globe, loses its existence. If we indeed be the Children of Light, if we have eternal life truly in our prospect, and be seriously inquisitive after the way that will conduct us to it, let us consider what eternal life signifies to us, how much it outweighs all that this scanty existence can offer us; how much it exceeds all our present conceptions, which are formed only upon low and very groveling ideas; how vastly it will recompense all the greatest pains, care, and caution of the strictest enquirer; how inconceivable an happiness must be contained in the favour of God, the supreme and original Father of all things; and we shall think no precaution too much to secure us from mistake in our way; no care superfluous to defend us from the great enemies of this enquiry; no pains or study too great on our part; but we shall zealously press forward towards the high mark of our calling, be chearfully received into the tender arms of a merciful Redeemer, and so obtain the prize which all should contend for, only in and through his merits and intercession.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVI.

ACTS, CHAP. II. VER. 42.

*" And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles
" doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking
" of bread, and in prayers."*

THIS chapter gives us an account of the first constitution of the church of Christ, and shews with what care, zeal, and assiduity, they began to strengthen and establish it. Being truly sensible of the importance of their profession, and the sacred nature of their baptismal vow; being fully convinced of the engagements, duties, and rewards attendant upon it, they conscientiously discharged them by their preaching, by being united by love as brethren, and by imitation as examples, by communicating in the body and blood of Christ,

Christ, and by offering up their joint prayers and praises to the Almighty Father of Heaven: In short, they convinced the world of the sincerity of their principles, by the strictness and regularity of their practice.

Would to God we were all of us followers of them as they were of Christ! But how vainly to be hoped for, when such a notorious neglect of public worship, and the holy sacrament, distinguishes this æra, that the name of Christianity is with many their reproach and condemnation. They thought the honour of that name so excellent, that, at the hazard of their lives, despising both shame and danger, they never neglected to pay a due and solemn attendance upon both: But we, who are so happy as to have times and places set apart, and not only with safety but honour may assemble together, think the attendance a punishment, and our laws truly penal that oblige us to it. It is lamentable to perceive into what a profane way of *thinking and acting* we are degenerated, as if Christianity were confined only to the first ages of it, and extended no obligations to the succeeding generations of mankind; as if the great Author of it, “who is the same yesterday, to-day, and
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“for ever,” was changed, or had given us another religion; as if men were not the same sinful creatures, needing the same salvation and grace; and as if the best and wisest men that ever lived, and those brave martyrs that dared to die, were either fools or knaves, deceiving or being deceived. Were one of them to appear again upon earth, and view the contrast, see men take so much care of their pleasure and interest at home, and pay so little attention to God at his table, must he not severely condemn our hypocrisy when we call him *Lord, Lord*, when by such mock-salutations, we only, like Judas, more effectually betray him to the neglect and contempt of the world? Such hypocrisy is more destructive to the cause of Christianity than infidelity itself: For an infidel denies by his words a Lord and Saviour, whereas the hypocrite, by the stronger and more influential language of works, stamps the blackest character upon both. Men may stand their ground against open infidelity, but hypocrisy carries a secret, but more destructive weapon, to rip up the very vitals of Christianity. An infidel may pay so much complaisance to it as to wish it true (as is the case of many of our modern

modern free-thinkers) but the hypocrite throws dirt in its face, and then persuades himself that it is its natural complexion, purposely endeavours to sully those beauties which he cannot but admire: An hypocrite that "knows his Lord's will and does it not" shall have a bitter portion assigned him, whilst some sort of infidels, such as the present Jews and Turks, whose ignorance in education carries some apology for their errors, will be viewed by the tender eye of the divine mercy. As our church, in imitation of our blessed Saviour (who upon the cross prayed for his unbelieving enemies) has taught us to pray for them, so I have charity enough to believe, that God will have mercy upon them and save them, though he may not confer upon them such a share of happiness and glory as upon good and sincere Christians.

There is scarce any neglect, any omission of duty, but may, by self-deceit, be larded over by an excuse. Some plea or other, founded either upon a defect of the understanding, or the evil disposition of the mind, is constituted as a veil to draw over their faults. It is much to be feared that those who absent themselves from the communion of
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the church for *conscience* sake, (as they pretend) very few of them will be favoured with that acceptance, much less that praise of God, which they so confidently but vainly propose to themselves. These separatists plead in excuse, that they cannot join with us, for two general reasons ; the one, because of our set form of worship ; the other, because of some rites and ceremonies in our divine service, as well as some other orders of the Church. It must not be dissembled that some of these are well-meaning persons, who, from an hearty zeal for the honour of God and the Catholic Church, have been eminent advocates for the Faith, in opposition to heresy, and most exemplary in their lives and conversations : But it is a matter of pious grief, that those prejudices, which have been so industriously inculcated by party, should teach them to run counter to their own natural abilities of good sense, and virtue of honesty. Though some, through invincible prejudice, and others, through shame and a fear of losing their established reputation, have been withheld from a public recantation of their errors ; yet the well-designed Act of Toleration, we may warmly hope, will at once

convince them of the liberality of our sentiments, and teach them not to deny that liberty to others which they so strenuously solicit for themselves. Since all our Dissenters whatever, even the Papists, under the late act, are free from any violence of force and persecution, they will, I hope, be led to value and highly esteem a Government, which holds out such gracious blessings to them.

Let us reason together. The common sense of mankind, and the reasons of things themselves, ought to persuade the Presbyterians, as well as convince us, that a set form of prayer is not only lawful in itself, from that pattern of a set form which Christ himself hath given us, but that in giving it to us he seemed to have had a special regard to the edification of his Church, in the public worship of Almighty God; that as it was designed to teach them, however enlightened, how to pray, so also, in compassion to us of a less enlightened age, it might be delivered, not only for our constant and daily use, but as an exact pattern for us; as an instruction likewise to us “not to be hasty with our
“ mouths, or foolishly to utter any thing be-
“ fore

"fore God." We find it matter of fact, that their very best teachers, too well knowing to what vain repetitions, and wild distractions of understanding, extempore prayer is subject, do now always use premeditated prayers, that as they "pray with the Spirit, they may "pray with the understanding also:" And must not any man of any common sense think, that if it be thus expedient for the teachers, it must be for the hearers also, that public devotions may be performed with one heart and one voice, that every one may understand what he offers up, and that (as it ought to be) both people and priest may harmoniously join in their prayers and praises to Heaven, and offer up an holy and acceptable service to God.

As all public worship, both in the Jewish and Christian Churches, in their first purity, was ever performed with suitable circumstances of decency and solemnity, they will therefore heal and preserve the unity of the Church of Christ, by approving and complying with such rites and ceremonies as are not only all of them perfectly innocent, but some of them lively emblems, and proper to remind us of the duties of our most holy profession.

feſſion. As in the execution of ſecular laws, and the adminiſtration of public juſtice, certain forms are eſtabliſhed as hedges of the law, to prevent the incurſion of the lawleſs and refractory, ſo when we bring God down to our ſenſes, which are incompetent to the fainteſt judgment of his eſſence and perfections, it is neceſſary to adopt ſome ſymbolical representation, ſome outward ſigns, to make that impreſſion upon the mind which ſpiritual and inviſible ſubjects ſeldom inſpire, as well as to be marks and criterions of that particular ſociety: And ſince Chriſt himſelf, the author of our religion, has appointed the moſt leading inſtitutions, it becomes incumbent upon all his diſciples, who bear his name, implicitly to conform to them.

Since perverſeneſs and obſtinacy of heart of any ſhape, whether in ourſelves or others, are vices ſo contrary to the plain dictates of right reaſon, and the more expreſs declarations of Holy Writ, we cannot but conclude againſt thoſe who, to ſatiſfy their humour and pride, ſhamefully divide themſelves from us, and under the moſt deteſtable diſguiſe of conſcience, tear aſunder the members of the Church of Chriſt. Contrary to thoſe many
precepts

precepts and injunctions of affectionate love and unity, given us by our blessed Lord as the distinguishing marks of his true disciples, they act the part of the Devil himself, in reproaching and slandering their brethren, and giving occasion to the infidels themselves to "blaspheme that worthy name by which we are called." No doubt they take shelter under that kind and indulgent *Act of Toleration*, which being framed in compassion to weak and tender consciences, was designed to screen them from the ill-directed zeal of some bigotted and intemperate men amongst us; but yet, no thinking man can plead this in favour of the wilful ignorance and perverseness of men, who cavil at the religion, while the arrow is directed against the constitution of the country. However these men may seem to be protected by the laws of men, yet we must fear that they are justly condemned by the law of that God who is the God of love and peace, of unity and concord.

As we may pass so severe a censure upon such perverse persons, so must we be as tender in our judgment upon those, who, being nurtured in dissenting principles, and blessed with no advantage of natural parts or good education,

education, to examine and correct them, lie under such thick clouds of ignorance, that they have nothing to guide them but the precepts and examples of their own party, which only tend to confirm their first errors. These unhappy persons, who are desirous of seeing the light, would see it and be glad, and who, in their dark and mistaken path, walk as uprightly as they can, are certainly in a safer way to Heaven than those of the obstinate stamp: And though our blessed Lord spoke of the Scribes, "if the blind lead the blind they shall both fall into the ditch," yet as we must discriminate between those who will not, and those who cannot see, so there is no doubt but he, who mercifully opened the eyes of the blind who cried to him, will at length open the understandings of these deluded people, and take them out of the "mire that they sink not." The sincerity of their hearts, and integrity of conduct, will recommend them to his mercy and favour, and though they are now "as sheep going astray," yet we may well hope that they shall at length "return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls." Those that thus "travel, and are heavily laden,"

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he will kindly refresh: He shall "open their eyes," that they shall "see the wondrous things of his law:" For his light will shine in their darkness, and "in his light shall they see light."

Let no man, however, from hence conclude, that if he also forsake our communion, that he shall not abuse either the Act of Toleration, nor any act of the divine mercy: Such an one, forsaking the Church with his eyes open, and without sufficient, well-grounded reasons, seems to have no title to the benefit of the one or of the other. The *Act of Toleration* was, no doubt, calculated for the welfare of the Church of Christ; that those who dissent from us, being free from any fear of persecution, might calmly sit down, and seriously consider the points of difference between us; that dropping all resentment they might the more undisturbedly view the excellencies of our communion, and be the more stimulated to return and embrace it; that the more weak and tender consciences, though by error they cannot, yet in their practice and conversation they may, serve God quietly, and without molestation; in short, that men might have both more
leisure

leisure and inclination to examine the matters of religion; that the learned amongst them, being convinced of their mistake, might the better instruct and influence the more ignorant, and that all might the more easily and readily return into the same communion, and be made "one fold under one shepherd." But as this was the effect which such a salutary law was designed to obtain amongst our dissenting brethren, so it must be ridiculous to suppose that it should tolerate the members of the established Church to fly off from her communion, or protect any perverse motives to such an apostacy: For, what was designed to heal and unite, can never in the meaning at all encourage division and separation. Those persons then, who for any other reason than mere conscience, and a sincere design of serving God more acceptably, forsake their old communion, and "run a whoring after" strange teachers and their own inventions, do not consider that they transgress the true intent of this law, and that by breaking the unity of the Church they must incur the severe punishment of divine justice, for wilfully and perversely acting against the convictions of their own minds; because,

because, what we are only allowed to do on account of conscience, we cannot, nor ought to do, *against* conscience: For that cannot condemn and allow two different things at the same time. How do we think then that we shall be saved by him whose church we have so shamefully despised, when we are the wilful authors of schism, by our perverse separation from it?

The question then is plainly this, which it requires only sincerity to answer: "Is it conscience, or is it not, that engages us to separate?" If it *be* conscience, before we proceed too rashly, we should use all means of information, examine things ourselves, read good books, advise with learned men, more especially consult the holy word of God, and offer him daily fervent prayers: If, when we have proceeded with these cautions, our conscience cannot be satisfied, we have then some plea for a change: But if the motives proceed from personal dislike and resentment, if from itching ears, and a desire of hearing "something new;" if from a view of some temporal interest and advantage; if from a truckling principle of base compliance with their mistaken tenets; we may be assured that

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in such a case we sin, " we deceive ourselves, " and the truth is not in us." If any desire shall exceed our love of God, and a prevailing sense of his exclusive right to our best services, it is criminal, it is contrary to the great and fundamental law of reason and revelation, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God " with all thy heart and with all thy soul, " with all thy might and with all thy strength." It is this which sanctifies all our actions, and excuses all our errors: As in other concerns of this life, so, more especially in this of religion, *intention* is the ground of moral imputation; we may flatter ourselves as we please; we may ascribe such causes for our dissenting or absenting from the Church, as our petulant or fanciful humours may dictate; yet we are all wrong, " if our heart be " not whole with God." If the love of him kept our hearts and minds, we should find few excuses to justify our separation from the Church, and much fewer for our neglect of public worship: For if none but that of conscience will do for the one, nothing but that of absolute necessity can serve for the other. Nothing can justify our separation from the Church but a firm conviction of the falsity of
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of its doctrines, and nothing can plead for the neglect of church service, but real, unavoidable, unfeigned necessity. Let those then who live within the pale of our communion, zealously and constantly attend to its ordinances, and let those who in an adult state have departed from us, duly examine their reasons for such conduct, lest such apostacy prove their eternal ruin.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVII.

ST. JOHN, CHAP. IX. VER. 4.

*"I must work the works of him that sent me,
 "while it is day; the night cometh when no
 "man can work."*

RELIGION, being a necessary work, because of the utmost consequence to mankind, demands the tribute of our most zealous concern and most speedy application. It is the most signal mark of pusillanimity to be always resolving but never acting: Whatever pretence we make to prudence and wisdom, we forfeit our title even to common sense, when we know that unless it be done, we ourselves must be undone. Even intending to live a new life and never actually setting about it, we act as wisely as if we should put off eating and drinking from one day to another,

ther, till we have utterly starved and destroyed ourselves. Now, whether we would live or not, is made no general question, nature herself directs us to use all proper means of life: Neither can we deliberate whether we should "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, in order to live eternally in the next:" We have no reason to consult whether we will be happy or not, nature herself prompts us to seek it without any use of our reason to decide for us: If then we would act consistently with ourselves, we shall by no means delay that which is as absolutely necessary to our souls, as our meat, drink, and repose, are for the preservation and well-being of our bodies. It is surprising and astonishing that men should take so much care of the latter, and so little of the former; that they should labour and toil day by day with so much drudgery, for bread and water, which perish in the using, and so seldom labour and pray for that living bread and living water, which, like the widow's cruise, fail not, but are increasing upon our hands, nourishing and strengthening us unto everlasting life; that they should be so tenderly in love with their frail corruptible bodies,

which

which are but dust and ashes, and will return to the earth whence they were originally taken, there to rot and consume away, and be so thoughtless of their better part, their most precious and immortal souls, which will return to God who gave them, to be disposed of as his justice and mercy direct, in an eternal state of happiness or misery; that they should spare no pains or cost in adorning their bodies, and pampering with all possible luxury it's lusts and appetites, to draw themselves and others into temptations to sin and danger of perdition, and yet will not take the trouble, means, or time, to purify their souls from the filth of sinful corruptions, to polish them with such necessary knowledge and Christian graces, as may cause them to shine out with beauty here, and everlasting glory hereafter.

We should consider then that the business of religion is so great and long a work, that there can be no time left for the delay of it. It ought indeed to be the first object of our lives, and in all states and conditions to influence our thoughts and direct our actions. Now, when we know that we are guilty of doing that which is evil, and omitting that which is good (which I believe we must all acknowledge

acknowledge with sorrow) it is plain that instead of doing we have been undoing the great work: Having a great many things to undo and many more to do, it is also evident that no time future is to be lost, but rather the time past to be redeemed with double diligence. Properly to effect this, we must undertake the great and indispensibly-necessary duty of repentance, which, as it is our entrance, so is it also our return into religion. Indeed till we repent of our misdoings, and leave off our sins, till our former guilt be done away by true repentance, all we do must be unacceptable with God. This includes in it both the essential principles of religion, the *fear and love of God*, without which even our best actions will find no acceptance with him. If any one pretends to obey God, and acts not upon those principles, his obedience, being only a nauseous compound of selfishness and hypocrisy, must be detestable in his sight.

Now repentance is not the work of a sudden thought and resolution, but of action and execution. If a man think he has done amiss and does not reform, so far from being better, he only condemns himself. We must not only *resolve* to abandon, but actually abandon a
sinful

sinful course, we must by the virtues of mortification and self-denial, master our lusts; we must more accurately attend to those evil habits which have naturally grown out of, or grafted themselves upon, our constitutions: These twine about our souls with such familiar and amorous folds, they soothe our minds with such soft and endearing caresses, that though, like Pharaoh, they may meet with some very severe checks, yet they will for a long while hold us under bondage, and "not let us go to serve the Lord." There must be a thorough change made in our minds: Our vices must first be rooted up, before we can plant any virtue in us; we must "cease to do evil, before we can learn to do well:" We must undo all we have done wrong, before we can do any thing to any good purpose: We must mortify our lusts, subdue our passions, rectify our affections, regulate our desires, and disannul all our bad actions, before we can be entitled to an act of grace, effectually receive the Holy Spirit, and be enabled to do those things that are acceptable to the Divine Majesty. All our best services are nothing worth, nay, they are nauseous and offensive, without true repentance, and

the grace of God cannot take place, till we have cleansed our hearts from all wilful and intentional guilt. Then it is that we can properly be said to begin the duties of religion; then it is that we can discharge our grand errand into this world, by doing all the good in our power; then it is that we must, and indeed only can, improve the grace of God, cultivate and strengthen in virtues, "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," and go on from one degree of grace to another; then it is that we must increase our faith, in temperance, in patience, in brotherly kindness, and in charity; and then it is that we must abound in all holiness and goodness, adorn our lives with an holy and virtuous conversation, and so make "our lights so shine before men," that seeing our good works, and being by our example engaged to imitate them, "they may glorify our Father who is in Heaven."

These parts of religion we are all of us obliged to perform, and therefore can any one in his senses imagine that this is to be done in an instant and requires no time? Can we delay and put it off to the last, and then, even then, do this great work, when the spirit of

a man can scarce bear the infirmities of decaying nature, much less a guilty conscience and wounded spirit within him? When we have spent all the day-light “in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness,” in humouring our lusts and serving the devil, that we shall be either heartily willing or sufficiently able to “work the works of him that sent us,” when night and darkness come upon us? When our understanding be so weak as perhaps not to be able to discern well betwixt good and evil; when our memory be so frail as not to call to mind the past actions of our lives, if at all, yet perhaps in a very indistinct and confused manner; when our wills be so very crooked, and by a long custom of sinning so obstinately bent the wrong way as even then to retain a love for sin; in short, when all the powers of nature lose their office, and the succours of grace withdrawn, what can we then do in religion? What reasonable or acceptable service can we then perform to God? When our lamp is just going out, how shall “our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works?” And what example can we leave behind us to engage them to

"glorify our Father who is in Heaven?" Alas! the longest life is no more than sufficient for us to reform our lives, repent truly of their sins and errors, to amend what is amiss, to put our souls into a good posture for another world, to train up ourselvies for eternity, and to make ourselves "meet to be partakers with the saints in light." How vainly then must we expect that such momentous concerns can be transacted in so small a time, when neither the powers of nature can enable, nor those of grace assist us to do them; when we can only open our eyes to see our danger, and no succour to relieve us; when the world have withdrawn all satisfactions from us, and our consciences stare us in the face with guilt, and threaten us with punishment; when we can receive no comfort from without, no peace from within: And when we know neither what to think nor what to do, whither to fly nor whither to retreat, how great must be our confusion and horror! How dreadful our prospect, and deplorable our state!

Besides, what a desperate hazard we incur by this delay? We are every moment staking the main chance: Whether hereafter we shall have

have time, or whether we shall have an heart and the assistance of God's grace to perform it, is very uncertain. God indeed has been graciously pleased to promise pardon to repentance, but he has no where promised life, leisure, and spiritual aids, to those who put off their repentance: He has no where promised acceptance to mere sorrow for sin, without fruits meet for the repentance and amendment of life: He has no where promised to receive those to mercy who promise to forsake their sins when they can keep them no longer. There are too many, who in times of affliction have been awakened to a great sense of their sins, much troubled for their wicked lives, and have made solemn promises of amendment for the future, and who yet upon their recovery have fallen into their pristine condition of sin and wretchedness of living. Now can we think that God would have accepted such a repentance? And can we be assured that any death-bed-repentance, forced from a man by the terror of dying, can be more sincere? If not, what hopes can be conceived of the man who dies in such a state? It is time indeed for a man to look about him when death stares him in the face, and, if he

can, to repent: But there is almost as much difference between such a forced repentance, and that natural one which proceeds from a man's choice in time of health, as between virtue and vice: And as we know that God cannot accept of a wicked man, so we may be assured that he will not of such a kind of repentance; because in all probability he is the same in heart as before, the same as he would afterwards be was he restored, and the same bad spirit as he ever will be to all eternity. I would not wish to discourage repentance, even at the hour of death; but sincerity alone can recommend it, and God, who knows the heart, will pardon at the last moments, and through the merits of his Son will accept the contrition; but yet, though charity obliges us to "think no evil," yet reason and Scripture give us no ground for hopes of its sincerity. Supposing it sincere, why should any man, for offering up to God the mere refuse and dregs of this life, and the "days which himself has no pleasure in," expect to receive such a glorious but disproportionate reward as eternal life and happiness?

Perhaps we do not design to delay this great work much longer; but the misfortune
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is, that the time to come is as much out of our power to command as that which is past to recall. We have not the power of Joshua to command the Sun to stand still, yet we may, by the assistance of God's grace, amend our lives to-day, though we may not live till to-morrow. Now who in his senses would throw away a certainty for an uncertainty? Who would run any risk when he may be safe? Who would trifle away the present opportunity of salvation to depend upon the future? Or who will part with that which is in his own power, and fondly dispose of that which is not, and only in the hands of God himself? If a man's life lay at stake, and he had but one throw for it, with what care and circumspection would he manage that action? And how do we know but that our next may be for our life and all eternity? So much of our life is certainly past, and God knows, many of us have been very improvident of our future happiness: How much or how little of our time is still remaining, is hidden from us; but a proper use of the few days of our pilgrimage becomes the duty of common sense and reason.

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Since the delay of repentance is chiefly built upon the vain hopes and encouragement of a future repentance, how unreasonable are those hopes, and how groundless is such an encouragement, which men raise upon them! If we sin in hopes that hereafter we shall repent, don't we do a thing in hopes that one day we shall be ashamed of it, that some time or other we shall be heartily grieved that we have done it? Is it not to act in hopes that hereafter we shall condemn ourselves, that we shall be full of horror from the sense of it, and shall have nothing but guilt to bear us company, and despair and distraction to attend us? And can we call this a reasonable hope? Is this a proper encouragement to a wise man? Let us then consider with ourselves how long we intend to delay it, surely not till sickness come and death makes its approaches to us: This would be as egregious a piece of folly as if a man should be content to be ship-wrecked, in hopes that he shall afterwards escape by a plank to shore. But perhaps we only desire to postpone it till the heat of youth and lust be gone, and the cooler and calmer hours of life succeed, which may furnish a more convenient season; but it is
certainly

certainly much more in our power, by the assistance of God's grace, (which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men) to conquer our lusts now, and resist the most heady and violent temptations to vice, than either to secure the future time, or recover that which is once past and gone. But supposing we are more reasonable, and desire only to put it off for a very little while: why should we thus neglect it till even *to-morrow*? To-morrow will be as this day, only with this difference, that our passions will grow stronger and our disposition to goodness more languid: We shall be continually craving more time by little and little, till we have spent all our opportunities, and insensibly arrive at the very brink of eternity. So that there is no future time that a man can reasonably fix to be a good man: Should it arrive, it would be to no purpose, because we must always begin; and should it never be, then must our impenitent and unprepared state be very hazardous and threaten a doubtful immortality.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVIII.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. XXI. VER. 34.

*“ Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your
 “ hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and
 “ drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so
 “ that day come upon you unawares.”*

WE are all of us immortal spirits, cloathed at present with flesh and blood, and this world is a school in which we are trained up for eternity. God has given us understanding to know, and power sufficient for the discharge of our duty : And though he has gifted men with different portions, yet he expects from all such an improvement as shall advance his glory and our future happiness. To promote this great end he has given us all time and opportunity, even this present life-time, not too long if ever so carefully

fully employed, nor yet too short if we will employ it as we ought. By a prostitution of this season the longest is but too short, and the shortest will prove but too long. If we be not prepared to give up our accounts, though we had ever so many years, yet to us the time will be too short, and we shall vainly wish for more; and if our days be but a span long, they will be too many for us to have employed in vanity and sin.

Since then death and life are set before us, and it is neither a short nor a long life, but a bad or good use of it, that our future state depends upon, let us all endeavour to redeem the time.. Nature has implanted in every man's breast such a desire of life and happiness, that we all of us wish at least, when we die, to pass into a state of bliss; and we are apt to hope for what we so strongly desire; But the question is, Do our reason and conscience so far justify those hopes, that we may safely rely upon them? Do they not rather tell us that they are not well grounded? If we examine our lives, it is to be feared that we have been deluded into very false ones; witness those many duties which we have too notoriously neglected, and those many

many sins which we have so grievously committed. The best of men have need to "examine their reins and their hearts," to reflect seriously and with grief upon their many failings and miscarriages; but those whose whole lives, perhaps, have been nothing but long trains of iniquity and sin, and in which are scarcely to be found any remarkable actions of piety and goodness, must sometimes feel the compunction of a wounded spirit: But here even these very bad men, who are almost hardened and stupified by an habit of sinning, would willingly self-deceive and persuade themselves that there is nothing very notorious and criminal in the conduct of their lives, when, if they dared to look back, they would find nothing but guilt and shame to confront them; or forward, nothing but wrath and vengeance to overwhelm their guilty souls. What shall we say to those too many amongst us who involve themselves so frequently, every day, nay, every hour, in that most heinous and dreadful sin of *curseing and swearing*; that scarce an expression escapes their lips but the name of the great and holy God is taken in vain; often in their foolish mirth and conversation, and sometimes to

attest

attest a lie and damn their brother? What shall we say to those who so notoriously break the Sabbath by following their worldly business, seldom come to reverence God's sanctuary, and never appear at the Lord's table, though they must at the same time be conscious that they shamefully violate the laws of God and man by such neglects? What shall we think of those who waste so much time in idleness, drunkenness, and rioting, turning themselves into loathsome beasts or furious madmen, to the ruin of their estates, the impoverishment of their families, the burthening of honest men and societies, the great corruption of manners, and the disgrace of religion? What may we not remark of those whose evil tongues being set on fire of hell, basely singe their neighbour's reputation; who go from house to house to tell lies, to cast their aspersions, and to breed quarrels; and who scruple not commonly by assertion, and sometimes by oath, to bear false witness. These very notorious, and other more secret vices, have engrossed, perhaps, the greatest part of our lives: What shall we say then? What shall we do? We are well assured that the "wrath of God is revealed against all un-
 "godly

“godly men,” and that we ourselves very justly deserve it : So much of our lives is past, in which we have done much evil and very little good. What fruit then can we expect to receive from those things whereof we cannot but be ashamed, and are more especially assured that the “end of these things is death?” Our former rebellion calls for the most humble future obedience : Surely it is high time to open our eyes out of this fatal slumber ; to “arise and call upon our God” whilst he is near ; and to seek him by true repentance whilst he may be found. We should not defer to make our peace with him, because the world is so full of dangers and uncertainties. The great time of trial, the hour of death, must arrive ; and after that the more solemn and dreadful time, the Day of Judgment : If we be prepared for the one, we shall also be for the other ; as Death leaves us, so Judgment will find us ; if we then “shall be filthy, we shall be filthy still,” for there is no repentance in the grave ; and if we be holy, we shall be holy still ; the time of our spiritual warfare will be happily accomplished ; and though our final sentence does not pass upon us, yet will our state be fixed and unalterable.

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How great therefore must be our happiness, even in this life, “ if we keep innocency, and “ do the thing that is right ;” if we “ fear “ God, and walk in his ways ;” if, whenever we go astray, we return unto him with an humble and contrite heart. Then we are at peace with God, and satisfied with ourselves : We may think upon Death and Judgment with great calmness and serenity of mind : We shall resign our breath with comfort, and with hopes of glory wait for the sound of the last trump. As “ the sting of death is “ sin,” so the terror of the great day only affects sinners ; only those who will not be persuaded, either by the mercies of God or the fear of his judgments, to repent and return to him. If we shall truly forsake our sins, and sincerely endeavour to live in obedience to the laws and commands of God, the oftener and the more we meditate upon death and judgment, the greater joy shall we feel : “ Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, “ when he cometh, shall find so doing.” Let us therefore, as soon as possible, put ourselves into this posture of preparation : Let our “ loins be girt about us, and our lamps “ burning, and we ourselves like unto men “ that

"that wait for the Lord." Surely nothing can equal the consideration of eternal happiness to a reflecting mind ; and if our natural thirst after happiness will not stimulate our endeavours to attain it, all the powers of rhetoric will be thrown away upon us.

Let me exhort then those that are young, and have not as yet in any great measure entered into evil habits, to beware of the manifold temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, those three great and subtle enemies of the soul, and flee from sin as from the face of a serpent. Let God have the possession of their hearts, and fortify them with those gracious assistances of his holy spirit which he will vouchsafe to them. Let them take an especial care in the choice of their company, and stand upon their guard against every approach of sin : Thus they may prevent the Devil, though not indeed from tempting, yet from overcoming them, from seducing them into the paths of destruction, so save themselves a great deal of the trouble, shame, and pain of a solemn and an afflicting repentance. They have now an opportunity of doing a glorious work, and a most acceptable service to God, let them give him

offering of their innocent hearts and tender years, and that will doubtless engage his particular blessing and protection of them all their lives; by cleaving to him and resolving to serve him, being so strongly courted, and so hotly assaulted on every side by their spiritual enemies, they will certainly draw down upon them the dew of Heaven from above. Now is the time of grace, which, if they be careful to ask, they shall have it, and if they be diligent to improve it, more shall be given them. As they may never live to be old, let them now begin; their unspotted life shall be a greater blessing than old age, and their piety a greater ornament than the hoary head. It would be adviseable for parents and masters to take them a little more into their care, and to keep them from those many temptations with which they are encompassed, and those snares that are laid for them. How happy would it be for them did they curb the violence of their growing appetites and passions, inspect and govern their conduct; if they would "train them
 "up in the way they should go," and "bring
 "them up in the fear and nurture of the
 "Lord;" if they would teach them those
 necessary

necessary truths which they ought to know, and influence their conduct by seasonable reproof and advice, by suitable correction and laudable examples; in short, would they take as much pains to instruct and further them in their duty, to gain them an interest in Heaven, as they do teach them the vanities of this present world, and provide for them the perishing riches of Mammon, then would they tread the happy paths of virtue, would manfully fight the glorious battles of their Christian warfare, and, being happily successful over their enemies, receive a crown of everlasting glory from the great Author and Finisher of our holy faith.

As for those that are arrived at manhood, and are in the prime of their age and strength, they must be reminded, that the follies of youth and its follies ought to give place to sound reason and serious consideration. This should be the age of prudence and discretion, of wisdom and wariness: If they will ever do any thing to any good purpose in religion, now is the time, when the powers both of body and mind are in their greatest vigour and perfection; not a day or opportunity should slip over their heads whereby to secure,

as much and as soon as possible, their future interest and happiness. Nothing can be a greater reflection, than that they enjoy all the means and opportunities of making themselves for ever happy, and yet employ them upon such things, and in such pursuits, as cannot fail to involve them in many vices and follies, and at last the extremest misery.

As for those that are stricken in years, they of all people need not be acquainted that it is high time for them to awake out of sleep, and begin a new life; if they ever intend to do any thing before they go out of this world, let them instantly begin, because a great part of the time which is already spent, is too much to have been employed in sins and follies. As we grow older, we should grow wiser and better, and then "the hoary head is a crown of glory," if it be found in the way of righteousness. Follies may be excused in children, and extravagancies may be forgiven in youth; but when we become men, we ought to put away childish things. The more we advance in years, the more treasures of knowledge and goodness should we be laying up for our support. In our old age, when almost every thing be-
gin

gin to fail us, there is not to be found any true delight and satisfaction to balance the natural evils and infirmities we groan under, but the pleasing reflections of a well-spent life, and the joyful expectations of a better. *Young* men may flatter themselves with many years, but *old* men stand on the brink of eternity, and by course of time are ready to fall into its gulph; and therefore, though inconsideration in the one is hurtful and dangerous, yet in the other it is highly unpardonable. There is certainly no trifling for those who have lived the very best of lives, much less for those who have been doing nothing, or worse than nothing, a long series of unprofitable years. Let them then very seriously consider, that their work is great, and time short; that their sun is going down and near its setting; and that there is no time to loiter upon the road, lest night come upon them, and they stumble in the dark. A traveller would not be accounted very wise, who, having a long journey to go before night, should, instead of diligently pursuing the road, lie down to sleep, or divert himself wholly with amusements, or puzzle himself by strange bye-ways, or lose himself

among dangerous rocks and mountains, when he had a plain and direct way to travel in : But this folly is not comparable with that of old men, who have never either set one foot forward on their journey to Eternity, or have taken wrong and dangerous roads through the bye-ways of iniquity, and strayed through the crooked ones of Folly. The traveller may expect the return of day-light, and make a better use of it ; but the old sinner has lost all the day that was given him, and must now lie down in darkness, where no sun can break in upon him, no light visit him : The flashes of conscience, like lightning upon a devoted victim's head, will represent to him the dismal gulph he has fallen into, and the horrors of that place from which he can never stir. Alas ! old man, thou art just going to die, and perhaps hast not yet begun to live ! Thy passions and lusts are perhaps yet unsubdued, have had no other mortification than what arises from the infirmities of thy age ! How many good thoughts and resolutions' hast thou entertained ? How many good and worthy actions hast thou performed in thy whole life ? I fear, when they are counterbalanced by all omissions

omissions of necessary duties, and commissions of notorious sins, thou wilt have an heavy charge against thee, and nothing or very little to plead in thy behalf: And yet thou believest thou hast yet time enough to set thy house in order, to make thy peace with God, and secure thy eternal interest. It is very strange to see how, in the very extremities of old age, many men act as if they had a thousand years to live: They make no preparation for death, though it dogs them at their very heels, has just overtaken them, and is ready to give them the fatal stroke:

In short, how young or old soever we be, of what age or condition soever, let none of us put off this great and necessary work of reforming our lives: Let us daily "exhort one another," whilst 'tis called to-day, lest any of us "should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." If we have deferred this work till now, let us begin to-day: It is God's infinite mercy to us that it is not quite too late, that the day of his patience is not quite over, and the door of mercy shut against us. Let us make what haste we can: We cannot be too hasty to be good: Life will be too nimble for us, and go on faster than our work;

work ; probably death may prevent us, and surprize us unawares. Let us, if we dare, neglect and abuse ourselves a little while longer, till all opportunities of working out our salvation be slipped out of our hands, never to be recovered, never to be recalled, no, not by the most earnest wishes and desires, by the most fervent prayers and tears : But, I pray God, we may all of us be wiser.

To conclude : If a man be travelling to a place, as soon as he finds himself out of the way, he stops, makes enquiry, and has no inclination to go wrong any further : If a man be sick, he will, if he can, be presently well, and not put it off to the future : Most men will gladly seize the first opportunity of being rich and great : And every man almost catches at the first offers of a great place, or a good purchase, immediately secures them, lest the opportunity vanish, and “ another “ step down before him.” Now, “ let not “ the children of this world be in their generation wiser than the children of light :” Let us do much more for ourselves in matters so much greater : Let us return from the error of our ways, and save ourselves if we can. When happiness presents itself, let

us not turn our backs upon it, and bid it come again to-morrow. Perhaps we may never be so fairly offered again: Perhaps the day of salvation may not come again to-morrow to us; Nay, perhaps to-morrow itself may never come.

Now let the God of all mercy and patience give every one of us the wisdom to know, and grace to do, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, before they be forever hidden from our eyes, for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. The first of these is the fact that the
2. second of these is the fact that the
3. third of these is the fact that the
4. fourth of these is the fact that the
5. fifth of these is the fact that the
6. sixth of these is the fact that the
7. seventh of these is the fact that the
8. eighth of these is the fact that the
9. ninth of these is the fact that the
10. tenth of these is the fact that the

Chill my Lord
and blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus
who hidden from our eyes for the sake of
that being to our good before they be for
and grace to do, in this our day, the things
I was, one of us the wisdom to know,
and the love to all man's salvation

KOMITEE

S E R M O N XIX.

2 CORINTHIANS, CHAP. V. VER. 10.

*“ For we must all appear before the Judgment
 “ Seat of Christ, that every one may receive
 “ the things done in his body, according to
 “ that he hath done, whether it be good or
 “ bad.”*

TO take away the sins of the world, to inform us in the truth, to encourage us to virtue, and deter us from vice, by the proposal of rewards and punishments, and so to bring us to God and Heaven at last, was the great, the wise, the gracious end of our Redeemer: But he is not only our Redeemer but our Judge. That there will be a general and future judgment, requires no other proof than what our own reason dictates.

tates. For man being a dependent creature upon the bounty and goodness of God, and receiving all he enjoys from his hand, must be subject to the laws of his great and sovereign Lord, and accountable to him for the use and abuse of those talents entrusted to his care. Now no laws can be given but to rational and free agents, and if we be conscious to ourselves that we belong to that class of beings, we must consider ourselves objects of them. But whence proceed all those sad or joyful presages, all those hopes and fears, all those various dispositions in bad and good men, but from an inward persuasion of the certainty of a future judgment? And whence should this arise, so as to be universal, but from that God, who, as he has written his name upon every creature, has also written this truth upon the heart of every thinking man?

God's attributes directly point to judgment: His inflexible justice must be satisfied: His infinite intelligence pervades the very essences of things; his infinite holiness cannot be warped from the rectitude of his unerring will; and his infinite power can reach the most dignified sinner. No creature

ture can possibly be exempt from his jurisdiction; no person, of what sex or age, of what state or quality, of what kingdom or people, of what place or age of the world soever, can ever escape the judgment of God; but all without distinction shall be the objects of his justice, shall one day be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ, shall answer for what they have done in this world, and receive their final sentence of everlasting happiness or misery, in that which is to come. How careful should we be then to dedicate our thoughts and endeavours to the service of God, to employ our time in doing all possible good, in advancing the glory of God, and the happiness of ourselves and others; not to content ourselves with barely abstaining from evil, but learn to do good? The more we sink into vice, the more severe must be our sentence, the more we improve in Christian virtue, the more will the countenance of our Redeemer be changed in our favour.

Respecting the offences committed in direct violation of the Ten Commandments, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no doubt but they will be severely punished, unless truly
repented

repented of, and entirely forsaken. To have any other but the true God, or not to fear, love, worship, and obey him; to bow down to the pomp and grandeur of this world, to serve and obey them, contrary to, or any ways in competition with, our duty towards God and man; to take the sacred and great name of God in vain, either slightly, carelessly, or to any wicked purpose; to despise his Sabbath and neglect his sanctuary; to do our publick business upon it; to be lazy, idle, and not to resort to the public worship of his Church; these strike at the root of all religion and true godliness, and therefore cannot but meet with more and severe stripes. Again, disobedience to parents and governors; murder, or any violence; adultery, fornication, incest, and impurity; theft, purloining, cheating, or any mode of defrauding; perjury, false witness, and scandal; all arts and devices to obtain our neighbour's property; these are sins of such particular guilt, that unless they be repented of, pardon asked of God and man, and all possible restitution made, they will greatly aggravate our condemnation at the solemn tribunal of Christ. To enforce and strengthen all these commands

commands in the Old Testament, our Saviour and his Apostles, in most of their discourses, have given us precepts, parables, and exhortations, under very severe threatnings on the one side, and most gracious promises on the other. They enjoin us to subdue all the evil dispositions of our souls, and regulate our affections; they teach us to exercise such holy tempers of mind as naturally conduce to our spiritual refinement. Meekness, modesty, humility, temperance, charity, a forgiving temper, and such like, are graces which not only ennoble human nature, but assimilate us to the God whom we worship. To neglect to cultivate these, is to deny the excellence of these perfections in God, and the duty of imitating them. To offend in any of these duties, is to reject the authority of Christ, to despise his laws, to slight his gracious promises, to defy his threatnings, and to place upon his throne, and in the kingdom of our hearts, that adversary whom he came to destroy. Those, therefore, who "call him Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he saith," shall never enter his happy and glorious kingdom. Great, notorious, wilful, and habitual offenders, such as have
abused

abused their God, and despised his holy ordinances, without a solemn and sincere repentance, and a suitable amendment in life, have no reasonable ground to hope for mercy from the great Judge of all mankind.

But some sinners may say, Is not Christ a merciful Judge? Certainly, and for such sinners sakes he had need be, because no flesh could stand before him in strict judgment. We have all, the best of us all, offended more or less; and if he should be "extreme to mark" out for his wrath "what is done amiss," "who then could abide it? But "there is mercy with him," therefore we ought to fear and return to him, lest his mercy, as infinite as it is in itself, should find no proper place in us, but consign us over to his justice, to be punished according to our deserts. The arm of his mercy is not in itself shortened, that it cannot save; but when men run on in an habitual state of wickedness, either committing sin or neglecting their duty, they throw themselves out of the reach of his mercy, and justice overtakes them. When they see Hell and destruction before their eyes, they then cry out for mercy; but, alas! in vain: Mercy has been
ever

ever offered them in this life, God's patience and forbearance, and long-suffering, have in vain striven to lead them to repentance ; but they had slighted and rejected it all : they have had neither the love nor the fear of God in them, to engage them to goodness ; but have followed, have courted temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil : In spite of the grace of his holy Spirit, they have rendered themselves incapable of his mercy. As the mercy of God is the free act of his own parental bosom, it is vouchsafed only to good men, from the plenitude of his most cordial benignity, and will be extended only to those sinners who, being guided by his holy Spirit (which is always striving with men, while there is any room for hope, and is freely given to those who sincerely ask it) shall have a quick sight of their sins, humbly and heartily bewail them, return unto God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. To attempt to set bounds to his mercy, or determine what or how many sins God will pardon in any particular person, would be the most wicked presumption : It is sufficient for every thinking man, that wishes well to his own soul, to consider that " the

"wrath of God is revealed against all ungod-
 "liness and unrighteousness of men, without
 "true repentance;" and that "he will ren-
 "der to every man according to his works;
 "to them who, by patient continuance in
 "well-doing, seek for glory, and honour,
 "and immortality, eternal life; but to them
 "that are contentious, and obey not the
 "truth, but obey unrighteousness, indigni-
 "tation, and wrath; tribulation and anguish
 "upon every soul of man that doth evil;
 "but glory, honour, and peace, to every
 "one that worketh good," whether he be
 rich or poor, high or low.

But there are some finners of a lower
 rank, who have not yet run into very extra-
 vagant lengths of wickedness, yet foolishly
 satisfying themselves with half notions of
 duty, and speaking peace to themselves,
 therefore unthinkingly continue in those ways
 which they hope are not dangerous. These
 may justly be termed *moderate* finners, who,
 though they be affrighted at the terrors of
 damnation, so as to avoid damnable sins, or
 a damnable course of life, yet rest themselves
 contented without any further fears of misery,
 or hopes of happiness: They think, that if
 God

God will but be so merciful as but barely to save them, it will fully answer all their purpose; they have no desire or ambition to be clothed with the best robes of righteousness, if they can but have so many rags as to cover them: They avoid all notorious actions, to screen them from the censure of men, and the punishment of the laws of the land, but choose not to perform such duties of Christianity as are acceptable to God, if they do not accord with their own ease, humour, worldly advantage, or pleasure. But all such persons should consider, that such a state of life, though it may please themselves, is nevertheless, in a comparative degree, odious and displeasing to God; though it will not subject them to such torments as desperate and wilful sinners will endure, yet it will not entitle them to the favour of God, but shut the gate of Heaven against them; and though they shall not be beaten with as many stripes as the open and avowed enemies of God, yet those few will be found too heavy for them: Then will they repent, but in vain; then will they be sorry, but too late, that they ever contented themselves with the bare form and outward

profession of Christianity, and never would endeavour to obtain the power of it.

There are very different kinds of men in the world: Some there are, who, through the shameful neglect of their parents in the education of their children, or through wicked and evil examples which they give them, are ready, even before the Devil tempts them, to follow him, and commit all uncleanness and iniquity with greediness. Others there are, who, being bred up in a genteel way of life, according to the present system of education in the world, become polite in their manners and outward behaviour, and humane in their dealings with others: All horrid and atrocious sins seem to wound their extreme sensibility, and, as they have been taught, they call them gross immoralities, and unbecoming human nature: They have a very tender regard for their esteem among men, and therefore, out of complaisance to the religion of their country, they will deign to go to church, when the law require it; they will vouchsafe to receive the sacrament amongst their brethren, and, Pharisee like, will do many other good things to be seen of men.

men, and to preserve their character and interest in the world. The Devil cannot successfully tempt these men to the commission of such actions as the world would condemn; but being unprovided with the true principles of Christianity, such as humility, meekness, mortification, and self-denial, the true love of Christ, and a proper zeal for his holy religion, the tempter finds an easy access to their souls, through their pride, their passion, their intemperance, self-interest, ambition, and love of the pomp, grandeur, and vanities of this world. Their romantic notion of *honour*, so called, seldom fails to involve them in very gross enormities, nay, sometimes in defence of that false principle, they will not scruple to sacrifice almost every duty of religion: So that if the Devil cannot directly tempt and engage them to open and avowed wickedness, yet, under the notions of *gallantry and honour*, he will seldom fail to accomplish his most destructive purposes of violating, upon proper occasions, all the laws both of God and man. These fine *gentlemen* (as they would be esteemed by the world) ought seriously to consider, that they are all this time led captive by the Devil;

that at present they are the objects of scorn to wise men, and compassion to Christians; that the great day will make them sensible that they are but *men*, and the sentence will, to their anguish, convince them, that they have been *sinful* men, and most miserable creatures. They will then be sadly sensible that they have lost the good Christian in the *fine gentleman*, and bartered away all their happiness for the bare name and empty pomp of *gentility*. The remembrance of their former honour, and the respect paid them by mankind, will aggravate their torments; they shall find that it will not, cannot quash or mitigate the just sentence of the all-righteous Judge, whose "thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways:" And they will be racked with envy and spite, when they shall behold those whom they despised, received into Heaven, to the joy of good men and Angels, and themselves thrust down into Hell, to be the scoff and ridicule of evil spirits and devils: For so pass away the pride and glory of this world.

Let all those persons, therefore, who are thus advanced above their fellow-creatures and servants, consider, that they are the more
account-

accountable from the superior obligations of their elevated state; from a view of those temptations they are subject to above others, let them learn to be humble, let their haughtiness be turned into fear, "lest the things that are for their wealth be unto them an occasion of falling" deeper into the pit of destruction. Let all the advantages they are blessed with be improved to the glory of God and the good of mankind, and then they will have, what exceeds all the splendor of this poor mortal state, a well-grounded hope of eternal happiness in that which is to come. Let them lay the foundation of their greatness in true humility, be good men upon earth, that they may also become glorious Saints in the kingdom of Heaven: Let those who are not blessed with so profuse an abundance, be patient though they be poor, comfort themselves, that to whomsoever little is given the less will be required, and always remember, that a poverty of spirit is the best recommendation to the Lord of Life: And let all and every one know assuredly, that "the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night." Take care, all of you, that
 he

he does not find you sleeping ; but trim your lamps and provide your oil, that, when the bridegroom come, ye may be ready to attend him to the embraces of his spouse, the Church in Heaven, with Saints and Angels, for ever and ever.

SERMON

S E R M O N XX.

MALACHI, CHAP. 1. PART OF VER. 6.

*" A son honoureth his father, and a servant his
 " master : If then I be a father, where is
 " mine honour ? And if I be a master, where
 " is my fear ?"*

NEVER had any nation such a convincing experience of the sovereignty of an Almighty and just master, and the goodness of a most merciful and tender father, as the unhappy people the Jews : Never could more be expected from any race of mortals ; but when God " looked for grapes, they brought forth wild grapes." That their ingratitude might appear in its true light, and the righteousness of God's various judgments clear and incontestible, the Prophet, in the verses preceding my text, introduces the
 God

God of Israel expostulating with this people in a dialogistic method: Therein he reminds them of his free grace and great love, in choosing them to be his peculiar people before the posterity of Esau, that whereas he passed by these, and, speaking after the manner of men, *bated* them; that is, suffered them to fall off from him in senseless idolatry and desolation, two of the greatest moral and natural evils. He had graciously taken them under his peculiar patronage and protection, and had not only honoured them as his appointed and distinguished servants, but blessed them as his beloved children and heirs of the ancient promises. Having thus declared these two peculiar relations, in which they could not but acknowledge themselves to be remarkably favoured, the Prophet, in the person of God, by way of a just and undeniable demand of those natural duties to which they were obliged in return, very elegantly but sharply reproves them, not only for their bare neglect of them, but their heinous and provoking affront offered to the great majesty and paternal love of God, by their scandalous contempt of his worship, and their unnatural behaviour towards him.

In

In these two relations of a *Father* and *Master*, as to the Jews, so to us also God is acknowledged to stand. This is a point which, though it requires our frequent meditation for the better conduct of our lives, needs, however, little consideration to evince its truth: This the very voice of nature proclaims through all her works, and recommends an undoubted and universal position. For, let us turn our eyes upon the creation, we may clearly behold, and cannot sufficiently adore the infinite power and goodness of God, must confess that he is the great and only Lord, Father of Heaven and Earth, by whose power, as every thing was created, and by his providence continually preserved, so every thing must needs be dependent upon, and obedient to him, whether they be things animate or inanimate, sensible or rational, visible or invisible: This truth, therefore, favoured in all ages by the concurrent attestation of the best, wisest, and most ancient sages of mankind, wants no particular proof.

Some few indeed there were, who, being lost in too profound contemplations of eternity, their brains turning giddy at the boundless prospect, therefore wildly imagined that
things

things existed in an endless succession of causes and effects, without any first independent cause ; but at the same time they sufficiently confessed their ignorance, by ascribing all the beautiful and noble part of the creation to the unintelligible principle of a blind chance. Such chimerical notions, however they had their patrons and followers, put soberer heads upon more rational researches, in which, from just and solid reason, raised upon fact, they fairly proved the being of a God ; wisely content with the discoveries, which Nature and their own good sense afforded them, of his supremacy and their dependence, sufficient to the great purpose of living well, they not only avoided the dangerous error of the other, (who foolishly thought there was no God) but happily ignorant also of our modern subtleties, they kept within the compass of their own abilities ; they did not attempt by fruitless searches “ to find out God,” to find out the Almighty, whom they knew to be incomprehensible to perfection, nor so much as fancied any proof *a priori* ; a contrary, indeed, but equally romantic and dangerous adventure, in *metaphysical Quixotism* : Being very well pleased to have found out a God, without

without any desire of knowing the *manner* in which he existed, they were still the more engaged to pursue their sober and useful enquiries, and by easy reflections soon discovered their just Master and tender Father in their great and glorious Creator. Thus, step by step, tracing out in some good degree the adorable perfections of the Deity, they still proceeded to discover what was most useful to be known of him. After a laborious course of studies and travels (into Egypt more particularly, where the children of Israel had before sojourned) and by their diligent application to books, and constant disputations, they gained in general great and worthy notions of God; and upon them, together with the common knowledge of nature and their own experience, they formed some very commendable systems of moral duty and religion.

It must indeed be confessed that their doctrines were attended with such difficulties as that unenlightened age could not solve, were intermixed with odd conceits and fancies, which the several founders of their sects invented and propagated; partly misled by pure ignorance (for they could not, and did not
 presume

presume to know all those great truths which
 we are now taught) and partly influenced
 by the desire of fame and vain-glory, the
 common foibles of our corrupt human nature.
 I wish I could say that these are not the too
 darling principles of some, even amongst our-
 selves, who ought to know better than to
 "love the praise of men more than the praise
 "of God," and to be unwilling to give up
 an absurdity which, though prejudicial to the
 cause of truth and religion, they will still
 maintain for the honour of appearing at the
 head of a party. I am led into this natural
 digression from my reflection upon the ad-
 vancement of Pagan theology, and the great
 obstructions it met with from those two great
 impediments to truth, *ignorance* and *pride*,
 the misfortune rather than crime of Hea-
 thens, pitiable in them "who lay in dark-
 "ness and the shadow of death," but inex-
 cusable in Christians, who boast themselves
 the "Children of the Light." We may say
 then with some little allowance, that the wisest
 of the Heathens had tolerable notions of God,
 and made good use of that testimony which
 he left of himself to the rest of the dark world,
 whilst he was irradiating one little part of it
 by

by the gracious manifestation of his presence, and instructing his *peculiar* people by the unerring lips of his holy prophets.

But whatever might be the case of ignorant Heathens, how dark and imperfect soever their knowledge of God was, it is long since "the day-star from on high has visited us," to illuminate our understandings, as well as to reform our hearts, and so "guide our feet into the way of peace." The Scriptures indeed, which are delivered to us, neither do nor can display to us, whose natures are finite, the knowledge of God's essence, and what he is in himself, but (what is at present our only and proper business to know, as absolutely necessary to the end of our creation) they sufficiently inform us what he is to us, and what he requires of us; that in those signal and especial instances of his *creation, preservation, and grace*, he is, in the strictest sense, our *Father*, and in those of redemption and a future judgment, our *Master* and Lord, and that his will and word are the only rule of our obedience.

It may seem somewhat surprising that any question should be made as to the reason of our obligation to duty, when we are so fully convinced,

convinced, from the obvious principles of common reason, and the exprefs declarations of Holy Writ, that we have fo great a Mafter to fear, and fo gracious a Father to honour. But ſince there may be men of too free a thought, and too ſmall a concern for religion and its ſacred inſtitutions, who would willingly ſhake off the authority of their Maker, and ſet themſelves free from the wiſe reſtraints of Chriſtianity: And as there are others, of whom charity obliges us to entertain a more favourable opinion, who, to avoid fanaticiſm and religious impoſitions, may lean too much to a contrary extreme, and undeſignedly draw themſelves and others into errors prejudicial to Chriſtianity; ſince ſuch men have appeared, and may ſtill be extant, who would fix *moral obligation* upon the natural relations of things, as they call them, independent upon any law, and have transferred it from what I conceive its only principle, the *will of God*, to that very precarious and dangerous foundation, as the ſure rule and true criterion of morality, I ſhall ſpeak, though with all poſſible brevity, to this important point.

It

It is granted on all hands, that man is a being capable of misery or happiness, present and eternal ; and that the very design of God in creating him was to communicate all possible happiness to him : For this end God made him a *moral* and *rational* agent, gave him a will to choose, and an understanding to direct him in choosing what would best promote the primary design of his creation. Hence it appears necessary that man should have a rule of acting, as well as other beings, and that God himself, consistent with his sovereignty, should give him this rule, as he has done to all his other creatures, that his actions being regulated thereby, might become the means of attaining that happiness for which he was created. Now this rule, whether expressly declared to us by Revelation, or discovered by reason, being designed by the wisdom of God for our guide, must necessarily carry with it the authority of his will : As it is his will that we should thereby obtain happiness, it is also his will that we should observe this rule, it being the greatest absurdity that he should will the end, and not the only means of attaining that end.

The law of nature is nothing else than the law of God, discovered to us by the use and exercise of that reason which he has made the chief and principal faculty of our constitution: And the *fitnesses of things*, and relations to each other, perceived by us, are designed to declare the will of God, and to acquaint us with such duties as he thereby requires us to perform. The law of pure, uncorrupted nature, and that of Revelation, however distinguished by name, and the method of information they deliver (which has given occasion for some men, not considering the difference between the primæval and corrupt state of nature, to oppose one to the other) do yet both of them proceed upon the same uniform principle of obligation, (for there cannot be two different original principles of obligation any more than two Gods) and they assure us that as God is the great and only Author of Nature, and all things depend upon his good pleasure for their existence and well-being, so are also the sanctions of punishments and rewards in his sole disposal, and no one can take us out of his hands. As therefore there is one lawgiver, who is "able to save and to destroy," so it is evident

evident that our obedience to his will, in our conformity to his rule, can only answer the great end of our being ; as it is the standard of moral good and evil, so it is the touchstone of all morality ; as by it all our actions are to be tried, so are we obliged by it, in any *given* case, to prefer one action to another ; as our salvation is the will of God, so it is his will that we abstain from some, and carefully perform other actions ; and that in *all* cases we should promote that end which his infinite goodness proposed to itself, and his infinite wisdom provided the necessary means to fulfil.

It is therefore quite unintelligible what some men assert, that *moral obligation* is grounded upon the eternal relations of things, as they are called, antecedent to the divine will, and that even the Supreme Being himself is also the subject of their obligation. This absurd doctrine seems to be founded upon a mistaken notion, his *necessary existence* ; and this again being founded upon another absurd position, “ *that nothing can be without a sufficient reason,*” has engaged some learned men, but as yet unhappy in their attempt, to prove the being of a God *a priori*, and as-

sign a cause to him who had no cause of existence, and is himself indeed the first cause of all things; who, being before all things, and infinitely happy in his own ineffable perfections, of his own free will and goodness was determined to communicate that happiness to certain kinds of beings; and foreknowing what would be the relations, effects, and consequences, that would result from such natures, formed in his own mind, he so ordered every thing as would best answer that end.

This consideration will lead into a true sense of the necessity and eternity which are ascribed to the relations of things. When God had determined to create such and such beings, he could not then be free to give them relations different from their natures; for that would be to destroy his own determination of communicating happiness to them, and therefore in this *hypothetical* sense they may be said to be *necessary*; but who will say that they are not primarily owing to his will, upon which the very natures and kinds of things depended? God therefore could not be determined by these relations which thus depended upon his own will, though in this sense

sense they may be said to convey *eternal truths* which we ought to observe: They are notices of the divine will, and therefore, though by a common but untrue way of speech, they may be said to oblige to a rule of action; yet the obligation does at length ultimately resolve itself into the will of God, upon which most certainly depended the existence of those things from whence these relations immediately flowed.

Thus the relations of *Master* and *Father* in God towards us, who are therefore servants and sons to him, can in no sense be said to be antecedent to him, because they existed only when ourselves did. They will, indeed, always carry with them eternal and necessary truths, as often and as long as the ideas of them present themselves to our minds; but our obligation to act accordingly will not be grounded upon the perception of them, but upon the will of God, which they thus discover to us. For, to discover is one thing, and to oblige is another; the one only giving us an apprehension of duty, the other actually laying us under an obligation to perform it.

Though,

Though, therefore, we cannot deny the relations of things, and that they are, in the sense above-mentioned, necessary and eternal, so long as our minds shall apprehend them, yet we should be cautious how we ascribe to them any antecedency or independency on the divine will, and imagine that he is under any moral obligation. Such conceptions as these may soon turn into *fatalism*, the consequences of which are destructive both of natural and revealed religion, as taking away freedom from God, and so in effect banishing him, and with him all morality out of the world. This, some ancient and modern writings too abundantly testify, calculated to persuade men that God does not concern himself with the affairs of this world; that religion is priestcraft, and an invention of the legislature; that men may do what is good in their own eyes, and give a general loose; and that they may advance their own gain, gratify their ambition, please their appetites, and humour their passions, without any hope of Heaven or fear of Hell.

Though we should fix a just value on our knowledge of the relations of things, as be-
gin

ing necessary to direct us in numberless cases in private life, yet we should not, as some do, so fondly cherish it, as to think a divine revelation needless: Neither should we sacrifice so much to this idol, which we are so apt to set up in our own deceived hearts, as to doubt and question any of the truths of holy Scripture, because we cannot, perhaps, reconcile them together; the one being graciously vouchsafed us by God, to supply the weakness and deficiency of the other: Neither are we rudely to depreciate and neglect the sacred institutions and positive duties of our most holy faith, because in the outward act they do not seem to carry the same intrinsic goodness as those which we call *moral*: We should always remember that they both have the same divine will to oblige us to them, and therefore the same sanctions to enforce them, that they neither of them should throw the other aside; but as mutual assistants to our perfection here, and happiness hereafter, go hand in hand, at proper seasons "in honour preferring one another;" that the principles of obedience in both ought to be the same, and therefore the outward acts of either can make us neither the better
in

in ourselves, nor more acceptable to God; but that both of them together, circumstantiated with faith and love, a firm trust, a dutiful and hearty dependence upon God, will effectually promote the great and ultimate end of our being, the favour of God in this present life, and the blessed enjoyment of him in that which is to come.

From what has been said, it is evident that sincerity is the great and indispensable duty required of us all. If the will of God be the ground of our moral obligation, then are we obliged to respect it in all our actions, wholly and absolutely, without "turning to the right hand or to the left," without any regard to self-interest or vain glory, and though attended with ever so much disadvantage or ignominy to ourselves. We may perform many actions *materially* good, but not at all beneficial to ourselves, either as men or Christians: We may relieve the poor, redeem the captive, and do a great many other acts of munificence and generosity, yet if we be spurred on to these by vain glory and a desire of popularity, we have our reward; whilst on the other hand, if, in obedience to God, and with an hearty desire of pleasing him, we

we do ever so little beneficial to mankind, we shall be favourably regarded, and amply rewarded by him who sees our hearts, and knows our motives for his sake, and the real good and happiness of mankind. Sincerity, therefore, should attend all our duties; it is this which renders them acceptable to God, and returns with a blessing from him; that prevails with him to overlook many things we do amiss; and sanctifies those we do well; it is this which is our security in prosperity, and our refuge in adversity; that gives us comfort at the hour of death, and assurance in the Day of Judgment.

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